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TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

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MR. PISISTRATUS BROWN, M.P., IN THE HIGHLANDS.

THE FOUR MACNICOLS.—THE PUPIL OF AURELIUS.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A PHAETON," "A PRINCESS OF THULE," ETC.

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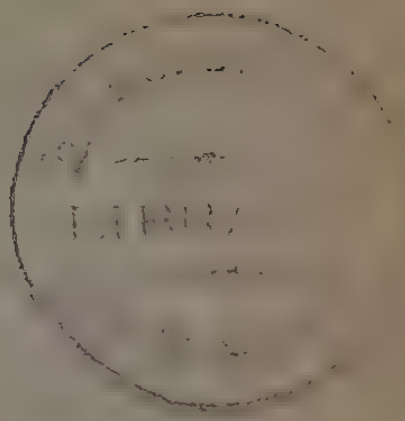
MR. PISISTRATUS BROWN, M.P., IN THE HIGHLANDS.



CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY WANDERINGS.

Mr. Pisistratus Brown, M.P., started for a ramble through the Highlands without any very definite purpose or plan. It was my good fortune to meet him one morning, by the merest accident, in Princes Street, Edinburgh, where he stood on the pavement pensively looking up at the Scott Monument. Even at a distance, I had recognized the plump and comfortable figure of my friend of old, despite the fact that he was now clothed in a suit of grey tartan, with a Glengarry cap set coquettishly on his head. As I drew near, I could perceive that he was little altered—that the old familiar expression was there, which used to puzzle the Conservative benches, and attract the eyes of the reporters from their gallery above. For Mr. Disraeli is not the only member of the House of Commons whom popular imagination has gifted with a "Sphinx-like look."* Mr. Brown, M.P., has it too.

* Written in 1871, when the late Lord Beaconsfield, then Mr. Disraeli, was a member of the Lower House.

Nature intended the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh to be a jolly, laughing, humorous, and fat little man; but ever after Mr. Brown got into the House, it was observed that a certain gravity lay over his features. He had covered his jocular good-humour with a thin veil of care and thought. He had also caught a trick of passing his hand slowly over his brow, and up towards his shining bald head, as if there was that within which passed the outward show of his round face, and merry, clear, blue eyes. Sometimes, indeed, he was found to have his gaze fixed meditatively on the horizon, as if he were resolving within himself the finances of far Cathay, or planning some diplomatic manœuvre in the Khanats, to stem the slow-working stream of Russian aggression.

I asked him how he came to be in Edinburgh while the Houses of Parliament were still sitting. He passed his arm within mine, and said he would tell me.

"You know," said he, "the Liberal majority is already big enough! What is the use of my remaining in the House to be a mere voting unit? I have stolen away a week or two before the recess in order to do some work which will really be of benefit. I have brought with me a bundle of papers, documents, and letters, bearing on the gross

grievances sustained by Her Majesty's Clerks of Customs, as regards salary and term of service; and I humbly think I cannot be better employed than in studying this important question."

I told Mr. Brown that he was quite right; that it was always better to work in the open air, when that was possible; and then we fell to talking of his projected tour through the Highlands.

It turned out, as I have said, that Mr. Brown, M.P., had no plan; but was not a member of the Imperial Legislature of Great Britain and Ireland certain to have plenty of invitations? In a few days' time his brethren of both Houses would be coming north; and there would be given him such opportunities of yachting, fishing, deer-stalking, and grouse-shooting, as seldom fall to the lot of mortals. In the meantime he was free to lounge about, and study at his leisure the grievances of the Customs Clerks. I proposed that he should spend a few days in the Western Highlands, before going north. He consented, on condition that I should accompany him. That night we went through to Glasgow, and next morning started by train for Greenock, a beautiful day heralding our setting out.

"Is there a black Macintosh here?" asked the guard, popping his head into the carriage as we were in the bustle of getting out at Greenock.

"No, we are a' red MacGregors," was the reply.

This was the last joke we heard from the gay party of artists who had accompanied us from Glasgow—a handful of dare-devil youths, who had smoked, and laughed, and told stories about the "Paisley bodies," and even good-naturedly painted my companion's portrait inside the crown of his hat during the brief ride down from the commercial capital of Scotland. And so we stood upon the quay of Greenock, with all the world before us. In which of all these puffing and roaring steamers should we embark? Far out before us stretched the lake-like Frith of the Clyde—with a brisk breeze from the west curling up its clear waters, with the hills of Roseneath and Cowal lying in a faint haze of heat, with sea-gulls circling overhead, and out on the broad green waters innumerable white-sailed yachts that dipped to the waves as they steered their various courses towards the mouths of the lochs. All around the base of these distant hills we could see the tiny villages—white and shining in the sun—which are beloved of the Glasgow folks; nestlings of little stone villas built among the rocks and the trees, and fronting such spacious views and such lovely scenery as belong to no other river in Europe. Should we dart up the Gare Loch and see the wonders of Glen Fruin?

Or sail up the noble Loch Long to the rainy regions of Arrochar and the silent sides of Ben Ima? Or dive into Hell's Glen, and cross over to see the preparations being made for the Royal visit at Inverary Castle? Or linger about the Kyles of Bute, and forget the roar of the Metropolis and the strife of Parliament in the loneliness of the lovely Loch Striven? Amid the crowd of excited porters, and frantic mothers with wandering families, and irate fathers who had lost their fishing-rods, and amid all the hurry, and roar, and distraction of whistling pipes, and churning paddles, and clanging bells, it was impossible to arrive at a calm decision. And so we "took that which lay nearest us," and crossed the gangway, on chance, into a vessel bound for some unknown destination.

And, lo! as we stood out towards the open Frith, all the wild noise died down, and the prevailing sound was the monotonous throbbing of the paddles on the calm water. Greenock herself, probably the dirtiest town in this unhappy world, began to shimmer behind a gauzy veil of sunlight; while down by Gourock, towards the point at which the Cloch Lighthouse, white as a star, juts out into the blue sea, the low-lying line of hills grew faint and visionary. The other side of the estuary was gradually becoming more distinct; and

along the western side of the promontory of Roseneath we came in sight of the imposing villas, and keeps, and castles, which the Glasgow merchants and shipbuilders have built over the sea there, perching them on plateaux of mica schist, and having them well surrounded by birch, and elm, and rowan. A village consisting of these cottages and castles, with plenty of wood around, and a picturesque shore in front, is a wondrous novelty to him who has derived his notions of the seaside from the monotonous sands and chalk-cliffs of the South of England. Mr. Brown can find no words —not even Parliamentary phrases—to express his profound surprise and delight with this sort of watering-place.

"Why," he says, "they'd call those mountains in my part of the country; and there seem to be lakes by the dozen that could swallow Grasmere and Windermere, and never wink over it; and every man seems to have dotted down his house wherever he liked on the side of the hills. Then the rocky shore, with its shingle; and the clear sea-water; and the clumps of forest stretching down to the sea—why is this not known?"

Mr. Brown, M.P., is a good deal more familiar with the painted villas of Como, and the malodorous hotel at the foot of the Thuner See, and the

gay boats on the Lake of Luzern, than with the meres and lochs of his native land; and in that respect he represents a much larger constituency than Bourton-in-the-Marsh. However, we steam into Kilcreggan and touch at Cove, and then cross over to the Holy Loch, and to the small village of Strone. At this point, which juts out into the Frith, and commands a magnificent view southward, with the misty peaks of Arran forming the furthest sign of land, Brown puts down his foot.

"You shall whisk me no further," he remarks. "I mean to study this section of Paradise before we continue our travels. For who knows but that we may suddenly find ourselves at the gates?"

Not only that, but the little inn at Strone, which we presently reached, instantly recommended itself to Mr. Brown as the very place where he could accomplish that great project which was constantly before his mind.

"This is the very place," he remarked confidentially, "to spend a week in, and get up some subject. You know I have all those papers about the salaries of Customs Clerks in my bag. Would you believe it, a member of the Ministry spent the whole of his holidays, a year or two ago, in going into this very matter. And it only needs the

mastery of certain details to prove the excessive hardship——"

Mr. Brown never finished the sentence. His eye somehow got lost in the far distance where ships were crossing the broad blue plain lying between the Cloch Lighthouse and Dunoon. He forgot all about Parliament. How could one remember the dusky chamber, and the rows of orange faces, in view of this great breadth of sea, where the specks of steamers were slowly moving, with a line of smoke in their wake, and in view of the pleasant stretch of beach, where the clear green water was plashing idly on the pebbles? Up the Holy Loch, at the mouth of which Strone stands, the water lay still and blue as a sapphire, but out towards the sea there was a windy greyness that lost itself in the haze about Cumbrae and Bute. For some considerable time the contemplative member stood on the steps of the inn, as dead as the Sphinx to all outward impressions; and then, slowly coming back to the world around him, he found himself scanning an announcement which was posted up on a board at the end of the pier. It informed us that Mr. M'Farlane was disposed to let out horses and carriages for hire. In a very few minutes thereafter we were seated in a waggonette, and on the way to Loch Eck and Ardentinny.

Very pleasant indeed is the shady drive under the great hills that lie above the Holy Loch. But what seemed to impress my companion most—especially as we got up the valley of the Echaig, and found the fresh-water Loch Eck stretching out before us under its splendid panorama of mountains—was the exceeding solitariness of the place. Here were no fashionable hotels or parties of elderly ladies being driven about in closed carriages, or villas built on the site of cottages once inhabited by poets. By the side of the lonely lake we came to a rude little inn where the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh and our Highland driver hob-and-nobbed over a trifle of honest Lagavulin whisky that had a look of peat-reek and moss-water about its soft yellow hue; and then, with freshened spirits and keener pace we dashed down the great and open glen that leads under the slopes of Cruachan back to Loch Long. How the long blue lake shone in the light as we came near it! and how green the trees were all about Ardentinny, where Tannahill met the lass whose praises are now sung in every Scotch village! Here too Mr. Brown, M.P., lingered awhile, remarking that a cautious man never pronounced upon whisky until he had tasted it twice. I think he said something about Sir Wilfrid Lawson—but that is not to the purpose. Suf-

fice it to add that we drove back to Strone, along the level shores of Loch Long, in the calm of the evening; and there were plover whistling afar off in the twilight, and fish leaping up with a splash in the quiet bays.

Then, having returned to the Holy Loch, Mr. Brown would have dinner postponed for yet another couple of hours; and we went to enjoy the humble sport of deep-sea fishing. No man ever died from excitement over this form of amusement; but still, in the gathering darkness, with the mountains around the head of the loch growing of a deep purple under the clear silver-grey of the twilight, it had its recompenses. And by the time we hauled up anchor to row home, the lights of Strone were burning like stars of gold; and in the east there were a faint star or two; and high over the Cloch Lighthouse—which was sending a calm yellow ray over the sea—there rose the faint sickle of the moon, to touch the wet blades of our oars as they rose and fell.

CHAPTER II.

AN INVITATION.

WITH the morning breeze blowing coolly in from the sea, through an open window that showed us the blue waters of the Frith, with the whiting and codlings he had caught the night before now lying crisp and hot on the table before him, with his eye ranging over fresh cream, and excellent butter, and hot rolls, Mr. Brown, M.P., would have been happy enough; but you may guess his frame of mind when a letter brought us both an urgent invitation to join the party on board the schooner-yacht Kittiwake, then lying up in Loch Shira, at the head of Loch Fyne. Now the owner of the Kittiwake is also an M.P.; but he sits on the Opposition benches, and during the session just closing has done his best to vex the Government. I remind the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh of this fact, and hint that he may as well be cautious about joining the Kittiwake.

"Mr. Gladstone won't see me," he replies, with a solemn wink, and in the half-whisper with which

a boy talks of playing truant. "Besides, could you get any place more fitted than a yacht for beginning to study an off-subject seriously? Those Customs Clerks' salaries, you know——"

Some half-hour thereafter two contemplative travellers might have been seen on the small wooden pier of Blairmore, patiently waiting for the *Carrick Castle*. Blairmore is a place of excessive importance, for it has a telegraphic office; and it is a pretty place withal, its straggling row of cottages lying at the foot of what we English folks would call a mountain, while the bold rocks that form its shore alternate with charming little bays, where the clear wavelets plash on white sand and beds of pebbles. Its inhabitants, at this moment, apparently consist of three men, who sit on the rocks and bask idly in the sun; but as the *Carrick Castle* comes churning her way over from Kilcreggan, other signs of life become visible. Some young ladies who have been transacting business in the grocery store come down to the quay in full holiday-costume; and Mr. Brown—but there is no saying who may read this veracious narrative. Suffice it to say that the *Carrick Castle* at last arrives, with a prodigious blowing of steam and noise of paddle; that we scramble on board by a gangway which is almost perpendicular; and that, as we leave the quay to steam up the

calm and lovely waters of Loch Long, my companion expresses his profound disgust to find, by recognising certain southern accents, that he has run against a batch of the inevitable tourists. Though why one tourist should hate all other tourists, and cherish wicked hopes that they may be drowned, or run over, or smashed up in a collision; and why any one traveller, abroad or at home, should think that all Europe was meant only for him, and draw a miraculous distinction between himself and the herd, is a problem which the British Association would fail to solve.

Once more we pass the half-dozen cottages that form the pretty village of Ardentinny, and then before us open out the northern stretches of Loch Long, with vast ranges of mountains rising beyond into the pale blue sky. Nowhere, perhaps, in all the West Highlands is there to be found so much variety of mountain outline as in this splendid group of hills—some of them low, and smooth, and undulating, with their patches of bracken and heather become as soft as velvet under the warm midday light—others more lofty, but still round and flowing in outline, with immense fir-forests stretching to their summit, and woolly fragments of cloud clinging here and there to the trees—and beyond these again serrated peaks, as blue and

sharp as the outline of Arran when the island grows dark before a storm. To-day we have every variety of effect, as there are huge masses of white cloud slowly drifting over from the western sea; and now it is the knobbly heights of "Argyll's Bowling-green," and now it is the peaks of the Cobbler and Ben Ima, and again the far hills that stretch over to Loch Lomond that catch the dark blue shadows and brighten up again as the clouds pass.

That mountainous promontory which has been grimly called "Argyll's Bowling-green," cuts the upper portion of Loch Long into two branches; and the more picturesque of these two, Loch Goil, runs up between the hills for a matter of eight or ten miles. In summer-time nothing could be more still and beautiful than this little loch, when the woods, and crags, and mountains on both sides of it are reflected in its dark-blue mirror.—On a rock that juts out into the loch stand the shattered ruins of Carrick Castle (after which our bright little steamer is named), a building which must have proved a powerful stronghold in the old days when rapine and slaughter devastated those silent glens at the bidding of rival chiefs. But these Highland solitudes are fast becoming peopled—in the summer-time, at least—by the pushing and industrious Saxon, who saves up his money in Glasgow, and

then comes down here to build a cottage, or a villa, or a castle—as his means and tastes suggest—at the foot of the mountains. The Gaelic-speaking population have become shepherds, fishermen, boatmen, and so forth; while there are in every village a number of inhabitants who have no ostensible occupation, but eke out a living by doing odd jobs in gardening or game-keeping for the Lowland or English visitor. Yet these Highland folks retain many of the traditional characteristics of their race. They are hospitable, courteous, and quick in apprehension; while even the poorest of them have a certain self-respect and independence which is very different from certain peculiarities of our agricultural labourer. Ask a shepherd to show you the way if you happen to get lost among the hills, and he will walk a couple of miles to do so; he will accept a glass of whisky gravely, and sit down with you to converse about matters in general, and especially about a son of the Duke having married a daughter of the Queen; but in a few minutes he will have convinced the stranger that it would be impossible to offer him a shilling. But this independence and sense of equality—which is no assumption, but the natural habit of men who are unaccustomed to the social distinctions of cities—gets sadly impaired along the route that tourists, and, above all, English

tourists, frequent. There the Highlander not unfrequently becomes a sort of Red Indian—greedy, cunning, obsequious, and given to copious drinking. Taking the bad with the good, however, the Highlanders are a fine race; and some—among them, I should think, Mr. Matthew Arnold—will regret that those Celtic tribes are being from day to day pushed farther back into the mountains, instead of holding their own and tempering Saxon civilization with their non-commercial virtues and their poetic and imaginative habit of mind.

When we landed at the little village of Lochgoilhead, and walked along the curve of the shore to the inn, Mr. Brown once more put down his foot. He would not budge—Kittiwake or no Kittiwake.

"Who knows when I may be here again?" he asked (for it is said he has some dark notion of being appointed the governor of an unpronounceable island in the Pacific), "and do you think I am going to leave a spot like this without seeing it, merely because a man offers me a berth in a yacht? Besides, I *must* put those papers in order before going on board, you know——"

Mr. Brown did not touch the papers. Some half-hour after luncheon, when he had sat and gazed down the loch, and admired the shadows of the mountains and clouds that mingled with the

green rushes at the head of the lake, the spirit of the mountaineer arose in him, and nothing would do but an ascent of the highest hill in the neighbourhood. Accordingly we set out for the summit of Ben Donich, following for a time the course of a small river that comes tumbling in white and brown masses down a rocky channel. It was a tedious and laborious ascent, but when, after two hours' constant climbing, we stood by the heap of stones on the bare and windy top, the view amply repaid us. All around lay a magnificent panorama of mountains—on the north especially, they seemed to be huddled against each other like mighty waves that had been suddenly petrified; while far away in the south lay the broad waters of the Frith and the open sea, with a network of lochs, and islands, and promontories between. We sat there so long and so silent that a mountain-hare came out from its hiding, and then, catching sight of us, darted like lightning over the scant grass and the rocks. As we turned to descend, the hills west of Loch Fyne were growing purple under a pale yellow sunset; and Loch Goil, beneath our feet, lay still and grey under the dark shadows of Ben Bheulah and Ben-an-Lochan. Indeed, when we got down to the village, night had fallen; but it was the clear, pale-green night that in those high latitudes

is only a twilight. We sate down to dinner when most of the inhabitants of Lochgoilhead had doubtless got to bed; and thereafter we discussed, over a small beaker of the wine of the country, our plans for the morrow.

"The coach that goes through Hell's Glen to Loch Fyne does not start till one o'clock," remarked the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, "and before then I shall have time to take a look at those comparative scales of salaries."

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH HELL'S GLEN.

A WILD morning of rain, and wind, and driving mist had broken over Loch Goil and its amphitheatre of hills; and when Mr. Brown, M.P., looked out of his bedroom window he scarcely recognised the place. The loch was a plain of stormy grey, with white-tipped waves rushing up; Carrick Castle had disappeared as completely as if the Athol men had finished their work and swept it into the sea; while the great clouds of mist that came over from the west worked such wonders with the hills, that Ben Bheulah and Ben-an-Lochan seemed playing at hide-and-seek behind the vast white veil. But as the morning wore on a brief glimmer of sunshine broke out between the showers; and at length, while the clouds seemed to gather themselves up in black and thunderous masses over the entrance to Hell's Glen, a great splatch of blue appeared in the sky, and corresponding dashes of colour began to show on the lake. And then, across the bars of sunshine, the steamer came slowly up the loch; and as the

noise of the funnel broke on the silence of the place, we made our way down towards the pier to catch one of the two coaches.

Behold us now perched on the box-seat of a huge vehicle, that has a team of five horses to draw it up and over the mountain-pass that lies between Lochgoilhead and Loch Fyne. Whether this gorge was called Hell's Glen by reason of the wild and rugged nature of its scenery, or on account of the intense heat that the mountains reflect down into its depths, it is hard to say; but at all events the whole place is haunted with legends of Satan, and a surly old gentleman who used to live in a solitary farm here came to be known as the devil himself. Shortly after leaving Lochgoilhead the road through the pass begins to ascend, and leads by the side of a rocky ravine, down which a powerful stream thunders night and day. In front of us the mountains seem to form a gigantic barrier, but gradually we catch a glimpse of a white road far up the side of a distant hill; and as the horses seem to have plenty to do, the road being rather heavy, we all get out and set out to climb up a short cut—a wet and slippery footpath, which leads through tangled oak, and willow, and birch. Away on the right of us glimmers the road that leads to Glencroe and that "Rest-and-be-thankful," on which Wordsworth

wrote a sonnet (having a trick of writing a sonnet on most things he saw anywhere). Higher and still higher rises the road—while we occasionally overtake and occasionally lag behind, the painfully toiling coach; while the mountains in front are continually changing their aspect under the breezy sky. And at last, when we have nearly got to the end of the giant pass—the road on which we stand being itself 2,400 feet above the level of the sea—lo! at our feet we suddenly find the whole length of Loch Fyne, with its wooded hills shimmering greenly in the sun, and the small steamer at St. Catherine's waiting to take us across. We are still a few miles from the loch; but up on this height the broad shoulders of wild moorland that slope down to the water are as nothing; and we feel ourselves already opposite Inverary, and the grey castle of the Duke, that seems but a speck among the trees, and the bold front of Duniquoich, with its watch-tower perched high on the bare rock.

The descent from this pinnacle to St. Catherine's will never be forgotten by anyone who has sat on the box-seat of the coach. To drive a four-in-hand along Piccadilly and through the Park, and up again by Kensington-gore, seems to the uninitiated a comparatively safe and easy performance; but to take a team of five horses at full gallop down a steep

mountain road, which has sharp turns in it, and an occasional narrow stone bridge that spans a chasm, is a very different matter. And as Mr. Brown felt himself getting through the air at an alarming rate of speed, he became silent. He had been talking Parliamentary rapture about the view; but now his face was fixed as that of Memnon, and he only turned his eyes from the necks of the five horses in front of him to the pile of trunks behind him, which threatened to come down and nip his head off as a girl might nip off a rosebud.

"Do you sometimes let a horse down?" he said at length, in a timid way, to the driver.

"Sometimes," was the grim reply.

"But, as a rule, they are sure-footed, eh?"

"Oo aye, as a rule; but a horse is no infallible, ony mair than a man."

Mr. Brown said nothing, but held firmly on, as the coach, and luggage, and passengers swung round the corners of bridges, or dipped into the hollows of the road. But when we finally got down to the shore, and stopped at St. Catherine's Mr. Brown descended, shook himself, and came forward with a very different look on his face. He was quite cheerful now. He spoke of the drive in a familiar and airy way, and asked if we had not "come a cracker" down that hill.

"I should not like to have brought those horses down," he said, critically scanning the team. "With a pair, you know, it would have been different."

Right opposite us now lay the straggling white houses of Inverary, and the handsome clumps of trees around the Duke of Argyll's castle, and the mouth of the little armlet of Loch Fyne that is known as Loch Shira.

"And there, as I live, is the Kittiwake coming over for us," remarked Mr. Brown, pointing to a handsome little cutter of about 30 tons that was running across the loch before a westerly breeze. I ventured to suggest to Mr. Brown—who is much more familiar with the forms of the House than with nautical matters—that schooner-yachts have, as a rule, two masts, and that this little cutter cannot fairly be suspected of measuring 60 tons.

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Brown carelessly. "I was thinking of something else—of those Customs clerks' papers, you know. I really forgot all about them this morning. But there will be plenty of time on board the yacht."

We crossed over Loch Fyne to Inverary in the little steamer that was waiting at the pier; and, as luck would have it, discovered the owner of the Kittiwake in the inn at which we begged for some

lunch. The member for the ancient and historical borough of Slow, in Somersetshire, is a tall, bluff, rosy-cheeked gentleman, with a tremendous laugh, a fine belief in Conservative principles, and a knowledge of shooting and yachting which the editor of a sporting paper might envy. His name is Weyland, and he is the colonel of a Volunteer regiment. He is great in the House between half-past four and five; for he has the art of asking the Government the most vexatious conundrums, which no Minister can answer. We receive a boisterous and hearty welcome; and then says Mr. Brown—

"Wasn't it here that Dr. Johnson asked for a gill of whisky, to find out what made a Scotchman happy?"

The hint was enough; and the steward of the Kittiwake, who was in attendance, was ordered to bring in, for testing purposes, a jar of whisky that had just been purchased in the inn. Warmed with a moderate quantity of that fiery fluid, Mr. Brown's reminiscences came thickly on him.

"Didn't Captain Dalgetty visit this place? And there are herrings here, I know. And didn't Burns come to this very inn, or some other inn, and write something on the window? But what will the people

say when the Queen comes? And—and—Weyland, old fellow, you're looking first rate."

Mr. Brown, indeed, was in excellent spirits as we started for a walk up to the castle that was then expected to receive a Royal visit. The building itself is not an architectural marvel—being a plain, square mass of grey chlorite-slate, with a tower at each corner, and a tall winged pavilion rising over the centre. But the position and surroundings of Inverary Castle are singularly beautiful. The rivers Aray and Shira brawl down from the mountains along rocky channels that come through dense woods, and are hanging with masses of ferns and wild flowers; the grounds around the castle are intersected by magnificent avenues of elms and limes, that have made many a fine perspective for the camera; and the building itself, from the summit of a smooth plateau, faces the blue waters and steep hills of Loch Shira and Loch Fyne, and on the left, the bold peak of Duniquoich, that seems to keep guard over the far and unseen deer-haunts of Ard-kinglas.

Thereafter we walked leisurely up and along the margin of Loch Shira, to the little bay in which the Kittiwake lay at anchor, her sails furled, and her graceful spars mirrored accurately on the still surface beneath. Mr. Brown was in such a gay

humour, that he volunteered to steer the gig which was sent ashore for us; and the post of honour was willingly accorded to him. It seemed to one, at least, of the party whom he thus conducted, that he made one or two preliminary pulls with the ropes, to see which way the boat's head would turn; but all the same, we got safely towards the neighbourhood of the yacht, and then our coxswain wisely allowed the men to get up to the gangway by the manipulation of the oars. A proud man he was as he stepped on the white deck and looked around him on the trim and bright vessel, on the calm bosom of the lake, and the fair scenery around. His arms were crossed as are those of Dan O'Connell in the portrait in the Reform Club; and he appeared ready to burst out with a noble quotation from Sir Walter Scott. It would have been the deepest cruelty to hint that the Customs clerks were wearying for that reform in their salaries which he had privately undertaken to secure.

CHAPTER IV.

SETTING FORTH.

WHEN on the following morning Mr. Pisistratus Brown, M.P., came up on deck, no words could convey his delight with the comforts and luxuries of the Kittiwake. The ingenious manner in which use had been made of every corner; the pretty decorations in the saloon; the excellence of the meats and drinks that Weyland's steward had placed before us for supper—all were matter of enthusiastic encomium; but the climax of his praise was reached in describing how he found an elegant little wash-hand basin and a veritable fresh-water pipe in his bedroom. Here a shout of laughter was heard, and the Member for Slow put his head above the companion-ladder.

"Well, whatever you may call it," said Mr. Brown, with some natural irritation, "it is a bedroom. I don't care whether it's a hatchway, or a tarpaulin, or a jib-boom, so long as I get a comfortable night's rest in it."

However, Mr. Brown soon began to pick up

nautical phrases, and he could scarcely be persuaded to go below for breakfast, so interested was he in seeing the men get the Kittiwake under weigh. Indeed, no one spent much time over that meal, for we were all anxious to have a final look at Inverary. And so, when we again went on deck, we found the large white sails of the Kittiwake bending over before a gentle breeze, and as we bore down the blue waters of Loch Fyne, Inverary, and the grey castle, and the noble avenues of trees went slowly past us in a moving panorama. The mountains up by the head of the loch were still dim and misty, and away toward the deer-forests of Ardkinglas grey swathes of cloud still hung about the hills; but round about us the sun-light was clear and warm, striking on the breezy blue of the lake, on the white stretch of shore, and on the woods that were still green and moist with the dews of the night.

"If I were the Duke of Argyll," said the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, as he pensively regarded the beautiful picture formed by the semicircular head of the loch, with Inverary Castle nestling under the woods and hills, "do you think I'd spend night after night in that melancholy hall listening to toothless old gentlemen mumbling incoherent speeches that the country doesn't care two-pence about——"

"I wish you'd speak with more respect of the House of Lords," said the Member for Slow warmly. "Whatever the country may think, mind you, these men are doing their best for it, when they might, if they chose, be fishing in Norway, or enjoying themselves on the Mediterranean, or skylarking among these lochs, just like you and me, who have no business here whatever."

"I have only to say," remarked Mr. Brown, with some suspicion of reserve and coldness in his manner, "that I am not neglecting my duties voluntarily. When I think of the Ministry and my fellow-members continually sitting up till three or four o'clock in the morning in this weather, I should be ashamed to find myself here if I had not definite instructions from my doctor."

Here the Conservative Member was rude enough to wink; and one of our party, a large and good-natured Glasgow bailie, broke into a horselaugh.

"Besides," continued Mr. Brown, taking no heed of the interruption, "a private member may do more good to his country by taking a brief holiday in order to study a certain subject, than by merely remaining to form a unit in a 'mechanical' majority that is already big enough. I have at this moment downstairs—well, I suppose I must say 'below'—papers on a financial topic which deserves, and

even demands, serious consideration. The salaries of Government officials form a subject which requires careful scrutiny; and how can you give it more time and attention than by taking a short holiday?"

"I suppose you've found out that some police-clerk has 12*s.* 6*d.* a year more than he should have," said the Member for Slow, with a prodigious grin; and then, putting aside the quarrel, he asked Mr. Brown whether he preferred the Campbeltown or the Islay distilleries. Mr. Brown replied in favour of Lagavulin; and the political discussion was adjourned "*sine die* until the afternoon."

As we opened out the successive bays and headlands formed by the undulating shores of Cowal, the full stretch of Loch Fyne came broadly into view, until far in the south we could see the bold line of rocky cliff that runs down from Tarbert to Skipness, and beyond that again the pale blue mountains of Arran, showing a jagged and faint outline against the sky. No plan of our cruise had been as yet accurately decided upon; and it was left for Mr. Brown to say whether we should go through the Crinan Canal and take a trip to Oban, or go for a preliminary run through the Kyles of Bute and thereafter round by Arran, Cantire, and Islay. He decided on the former, but insisted in the first place that we should have an opportunity of seeing one of

the fleets of Loch Fyne fishing-boats setting out, which he had heard was a most picturesque sight. It was accordingly arranged that we should anchor in Loch Gilp for that day, and not attempt to go through the Crinan until the following morning. So it happened that we got down to Ardrishaig, at the end of the Crinan Canal, about mid-day; and when the yacht had been safely anchored we went ashore to see the Iona come in with her cargo of tourists bound for the North.

When the stately steamer at length showed her two red funnels coming round the point, Mr. Brown hastened down to the pier, apparently with the notion that he might meet some friend from the South. But when the small and hurrying crowd bustled out of the boat, and struggled through the swarm of bare-footed boys anxious to carry their luggage for them, they were found to be all strangers, and Mr. Brown regarded them as they walked up to the small steamer on the canal, with a look of profound compassion. Yet why should tourists be regarded as strange and unhappy beings, whom one should regard with sympathy? There was nothing mournful in the procession of people who carried their hand-bags, and top-coats, and umbrellas, and what not, and who seemed to regard the little steamer on the canal as a mere toy after

their acquaintance with the spacious and handsome Iona. We saw the poor creatures off. Somehow they seemed to be away from home. They were going out into that wild western region where the Atlantic waves roll in among lonely islands; and we half feared they might never return to the South, or that they might experience rain or some other dire evil. As for ourselves, we were going through the Crinan, too; but we should be quite at home, and were certain to enjoy it.

A fine sight it was, that setting out of the herring fleet in the yellow afternoon, with the bronzed and varnished hulls of the boats shining like so many spots of brownish red on the calm blue of the lake. Here, too, were none of the tattered and pot-bellied fishermen of Brighton, living on occasional hauls of mackerel and occasional shillings got from visitors—but crews of lithe and stalwart men, big-boned and spare-fleshed, who plied the enormous oars with a swing and ease that told of splendid physiques, hard exercise, and tolerably good living. The wind had entirely gone down, and the various boats that left the harbour in straggling groups formed a strange sort of picturesque regatta, their oars scarcely troubling that still plain of blue. Here and there a brown sail hung half-mast high, just in case a slight breeze might be got

at the mouth of the Bay; but each boat had its four enormous oars regularly rising and falling as they all drew away from us. And we could hear the laugh and jest come across the still water, as two of the boats would get within speaking distance; and now and again a verse of some shrill Gaelic song would float towards us, the notes of it keeping time to the oars. The further the boats drew out towards the broad bosom of the loch, the deeper grew their colour under the warm and level light of the sun, until many of them seemed like rose-coloured buoys placed far out on that smooth plain. And then, as they reached a line of darker water on the loch, we could see them one by one run up the broad brown sail to catch the light breeze. And while we still sat and wondered how they would spend the long and dark night, and what songs would be sung by the side of the stove, and whether rain would compel them to make the sail into a tent, and what sort of take they would bring home with them in the cold grey hours of the dawn, lo! the boats had disappeared as if by magic, and there was nothing before us but the far and desolate shores of Cowal.

We had a pleasant evening in the snug little saloon of the Kittiwake; and Mr. Brown for once postponed the consideration of the Customs clerks' grievance in order to stake sixpences at loo (limited).

And then, as he departed to his state-room (having won the price of a box of cigars, or thereabouts), he informed us that on the next day he would show us all how to detect the presence of water-hens.

"*Cras*, to-morrow, *iterabimus*, we sail, *ingens æquor*, through the Crinan Canal."

These were his parting words; and they were very fairly pronounced.

CHAPTER V.

THROUGH THE CRINAN.

WHAT is a canal? The ordinary answer would be, a narrow and monotonous channel filled with a yellow fluid, that connects disagreeable places, and is the medium of a cheap and unpicturesque traffic. The dull-hued snake that winds about our manufacturing towns, that lies amid coal-dust and the refuse of factories, is, if possible, a more hideous thing than the melancholy suburbs around it. But there are canals and canals; and up here in Argyleshire a canal becomes a succession of clear little lochs, connected by a line of artificial channel that runs through the most charming scenery, and has its banks laden with trees, and bushes, and tangled masses of wild flowers. Here the small Highlander angles with a bent pin for fish that he can see down in the cool, clear depths; here the water-hen hides in the sedges, or sails out on the calm surface to call her young together. As you walk along the grassy banks every hundred yards produces a new picture—from the moment

you leave the blue sweep of Loch Gilp behind until you come in sight of Loch Crinan and the wild rocks that guard the harbour from the force of the western sea. On your right hand stretches a far plain, that is varied with stream, and wood, and rock; on your left the peaks of the Knapdale mountains are shut off by a range of hills that almost overshadow the canal, and are clad in all the verdure of bracken, and moss, and young oak and birch. You can hear the murmuring of streams in the deep little glens that are cloven in their side; and you can hear the call of the blackcock far up on the heathery knolls that shine in rosy purple under the fierce light of the midday sun. The small lakes that are strung like pearls on the lithe band of the canal are wonders of loveliness; and if you can only manage to escape the passage of the steamer you may forget that this is a canal, and find yourself lost in the utter loneliness of Highland scenery.

There is every facility, too, for the stranger to enjoy the walk from Loch Gilp to Loch Crinan; for towards the western side of the canal there are fifteen locks, and as the whole distance is only nine miles, one has ample time to get to Crinan on foot. Indeed, when we had seen the Kittiwake started on her voyage, we took no more thought of

her, and speedily lost sight of her. Mr. Brown's parting with her was almost pathetic; he had acquired such a tenderness for the yacht as men get for favourite horses that have served them well.

"She looks like a queen taken captive," he said, as they began to drag her ignominiously along. "I suppose when we see her in Loch Crinan, she will have her sails up again and be something like herself—freshening herself up, as it were, for her northward flight. And we shall see Jura, shall we not?—and Scarba, and Corryvreckan, and Colonsay? I declare to you, all last night, as the yacht lay and rolled in the ripple of the bay, it seemed to keep time to that old ballad about the Chief of Colonsay. You know how it goes—

> As you pass through Jura's Sound.
> Bend your course by Scarba's shore,
> Shun, oh! shun the gulf profound,
> Where Corryvreckan's surges roar.

Wouldn't the house rise to a quotation like that—say that you were warning the Government against courting Opposition cheers"—and here the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh unconsciously paused; but his arm was still uplifted, and he gazed into blank space, as if his glittering eye had in reality seized the Treasury Bench and pinned Mr. Gladstone there.

We were fortunate enough to miss the swarm of bare-footed young Celts who haunt the passengers by the steamer, and offer to transact business in milk and hazel-nuts. We only met one of them—a small maiden of six or seven, with sun-tanned arms and feet, and hair so prodigiously fair as to be almost white. It was at the Carnbaan Inn—a convenient resting-place at the beginning of the series of locks. Mr. Brown, obeying a maxim of his medical adviser—"Wherever you travel, the safest drink is the *vin du pays*"—had refreshed himself with a modest quantity of the Lagavulin he had grown to love, and was just coming out of the inn when that "kleine Marketenderin" came forward with a little tin jug in her hand, and said with the peculiar Highland inflexion that distinguishes North from South Scotland, "Are ye for any nits, sir?" Mr. Brown looked at the small and timid merchant, and said, "My little girl, I don't know what you say; but you are too pretty a little girl to have no shoes and stockings, and so you will take this half-sovereign to your mother and tell her to buy you some."

Remonstrance with Mr. Brown, M.P., about this preposterous action was of no avail. It was useless to point out to him that he was corrupting a hardy independent population; that all over the Highlands

the children enjoyed the freedom and health of running about with bare feet and legs; and that this small girl was being transformed from a merchant into a pauper. He folded up the coin in a piece of paper, and bade her put it in her pocket. Then in the most natural way in the world, she held out the jugful of hazel-nuts in return. The Member of Bourton-in-the-Marsh looked puzzled. He might have answered off-hand a conundrum about the Babs of Persia, or even accepted at a moment's notice the command of an iron-clad, but he could not for the life of him tell what to do with two handfuls of green nuts. Yet there was a principle at stake: he was forced to take them. Finally he bethought himself of his hat: and so it befell that, until we were well out of sight of that little Highland woman, a member of the Imperial Legislature of this country walked with a hatful of nuts in his hand, while an almost vertical sun was pouring down its fiercest rays on his bald head.

Weyland, M.P. for Slow, and two other members of our party, had gone on during this exciting adventure; and we eventually found them sitting in dead silence behind a group of tall bushes, opposite a part of the canal where there were abundant rushes on the other side. Weyland had in his hand a large black air-cane; the Glasgow bailie was re-

garding rather timorously a saloon pistol. Mr. Brown became quite excited.

"You just watch me bring a moor-hen out. I will undertake to bring a moor-hen out in ten minutes from these rushes, and as many water-rats as you like from the bank there—for half-a-sovereign I will."

"It is rather a mean way of making up your losses by generosity," I remark; and then Mr. Brown creeps up on tiptoe to the bushes. His finger is on his lips. He sits down with an awful air of compressed energy on his face; and then, in the stillness, he begins his performance. Since the days of Herr Von Joel—those happy days when songs, and glees, and choruses had not been supplanted by acrobats and ventriloquists—no man has imitated the call of a bird as Mr. Brown now succeeds in doing. It is marvellous. We almost feel ourselves becoming moor-hens under the process. Only the real moor-hens do not seem to appear. Through chinks in the leaves we scan the dense rushes; but there is no sign of that half-domestic wild fowl, whose yellow bill and bobbing head and white cleft tail are alike familiar to English rivers and to Scotch moorlands. But lo! as if by magic another bird bobs up in the middle of the water, some distance further down. "A

dabchick!" is the mental exclamation of every one, and stealthily the smooth black tube that Weyland holds is pointed through the leaves. There is a sharp click, a splash in the water, and the next moment the dabchick is lying on the surface of the canal, its legs uppermost.

"You've spoilt your chance of getting a water-hen all for that miserable dabchick," said Mr. Brown, with some irritation.

"That miserable dabchick!" cried Weyland, "You can take the breast of this dabchick, and give it to your lady-love to wear for your sake; but what could you do with a water-hen? Four-and twenty of them could hardly flavour a steak-pie; and then ketchup would do it as well."

"I should have had a moor-hen out in another minute," said Mr. Brown.

"Never mind," said the Opposition Member; "you can work the charm another time."

Mr. Brown soon recovered from his disappointment, and began to talk enthusiastically of all that we were to see and do when we had got out to the wilder islands in the west. He had vague plans for testing the flesh of various sea-fowl, to judge whether the home-produce of this country might not extend its area, and an addition be made to the food of the poor. Then he bethought him

of making a collection of stuffed birds, all of his own killing, ranging from the lordly osprey down to the sea-lark.

"We shall have abundance of time," he remarked confidentially, "once we have got rid of these obstructions; and you will see how I shall knock off that business connected with the grievances of the Customs clerks. I should be ashamed of having postponed the matter so long, but that the delay was unavoidable. How could one get up statistics, and make comparisons of tables, when we had all the bother of getting through the canal before us? Nobody could expect one to carry a bundle of papers nine miles, and sit down to work by the side of the road, could they? I don't think I neglect my duty any more than anybody else. I am sure I don't—I am the last man in the world to do so. But you've got to draw the line somewhere, and humour Nature, and temper mental work by physical exercise, or where would you be?"

Mr. Brown spoke in quite an appealing and almost injured tone, which was quite unnecessary. Anybody who knows the inhabitants of Bourton-in-the-Marsh is aware that not for worlds would they change their representative; and as for the Customs clerks, they are so accustomed to waiting that they won't mind.

Towards the afternoon we were overtaken by the gaily-painted little screw steamer that transfers travellers going North from the Iona to the kindred vessel lying at Crinan. As we reached that small port, which nestles in a corner of a rocky bay, the great steamer had sailed away towards Oban, and the Kittiwake was lying out at anchor. When we had got on board, Mr. Brown went to the bow and surveyed the prospect. There was rather a lowering sky in the West; but the gloom only heightened the wild and vague look of the rocks and islands lying out in the western sea, with the dusky peaks of Jura rising far in the South. All manner of sea-birds were visible; from the familiar gull that circled overhead, to the lonely heron that stood out at some distant promontory, a grey shadow against the dark rock. Mr. Brown went below to rummage among Weyland's guns, and was disappointed to find that there were not over thirty or forty cartridges ready made. However, he came on deck again; and, in the fast-falling darkness, his talk was all of shooting-adventures, and storms, and rocks, and legends, and the delight of being separated from mankind. He was as anxious for the morrow as "the brave Macphail" who fell in with a mermaid as he was returning to his love of Colonsay; and Weyland, who had discovered his friend's copy of Leyden's

poems, read out in noble accents these appropriate lines:—

The lonely deck he paces o'er,
Impatient for the rising day;
And still from Crinan's moonlight shore,
He turns his eyes to Colonsay.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM CRINAN TO OBAN.

As the tall Kittiwake stood out from Crinan Bay, with her white sails filled with a light breeze, her smooth decks shining in the sun, and her bows dipping gracefully to the long and even swell coming in from the Atlantic, Mr. Brown, M.P., clinging stoutly to the steel shrouds, became quite enthusiastic over the loveliness of the scene before him. He descanted to us on the wild and desolate look of Jura, with her gloomy mountains rising up in the southern sky; he turned to the smaller islands near him, and pointed out their rich colours that were soft and smooth in the haze of the heat; his eagle eye detected all manner of strange sea birds poised over or floating on the blue waters; and he declared that the motion of the yacht was delightful.

"Interfusa nitentes vites æquora Cycladas," he exclaimed, in quite a solemn and parliamentary tone,—"avoid the turbulent sea amid the shining Cyclades, as one might say; but did the Cyclades ever shine in bluer waters than these, and did

Horace ever see islands more fair in his dreams of the Mediterranean? And I would dare to add that there is more imaginative power in the wild legends that hallow those lonely rocks and seas than in a cartload of the stories connected with the puddles and sand-hills of Greece. Homer! I maintain that there is more depth of passion, of emotion, and of strong human interest in such a ballad as 'Helen of Kirkconnel' than in twenty Iliads all boiled up together in a tin pot; and as for the blatant history of that nincompoop Æneas, it is as atrocious a piece of commonplace manufacture as was ever committed in this miserable world; and if you want true imaginative and lyrical power, which is the sum and substance of poetry——"

Mr. Weyland, from the companion-ladder, handed up a breech-loader. The Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh regarded it for a moment with contempt; but he took it, nevertheless, and began to place a couple of cartridges in the barrels. We heard no more of Mr. Brown's theories of poetry, for he carefully made his way up to the bow, and placed himself there so that he might have a shot at any of those wild creatures which he had ventured to name for us. It is remarkable, however, that with two members of Parliament on board no one could find out in what month the statutory prohibition of shooting

sea-fowl ends; but then, as Mr. Weyland remarked, it would be a hard thing if people who made the laws were not allowed to break them.

And so the Kittiwake sped on, opening out the Dorus Môr, or Great Gate, and gradually getting into those long swirls of sea that sweep round from Scarba, and produce strange bubblings and lines of foam on the calmest day. Away over on our left lay the channel between Jura and Scarba, where the whirlpool of Corryvreckan raves. We listened intently to catch the strange noise of its waters, which has been described by many a poet as for ever haunting "the distant isles that hear the loud Corbrechtan roar." Campbell, who lived some miles to the south of Loch Crinan, says that even there he could hear the sound of the Corryvreckan straits. "When the weather is calm, and the adjacent sea scarcely heard on these picturesque shores, its sound, which is like the sound of innumerable chariots, creates a magnificent and fine effect." No echo reached us of the turmoil which generally does prevail in that narrow channel. But all around us were evidences of those powerful currents that have gained for Corryvreckan its legendary fame. The sea around us seemed to boil up from mighty springs; and here and there, between those spacious circles of foam, we could see the thin hard line of a cur-

rent. As the Kittiwake slowly made headway through the calm-looking whirlpools, her bow was caught every few minutes by some powerful stream, and twisted round with a sudden jerk. At other times she would come to a dead stop, as if she had run against a wall of iron. But so far from there being anything in the shape of a picturesque whirlpool, with a hollow centre, and a circumference of tossing waves, even the low ground swell of the Atlantic had disappeared. It is easy to understand, however, that these treacherous currents may, at certain seasons of the year, be greatly intensified in the rocky channel between Scarba and Jura; and, although the whirlpool of Corryvreckan, as it figures in books illustrative of natural wonders, is a myth, the swirls of the sea in the narrow straits have destroyed many a boat and drowned many a man, while in the calmest season the passage is never without a certain danger. Mr. Weyland, who is somewhat anxiously looking after the conduct of the Kittiwake, tells us that one evening last summer a profound excitement was caused in Oban by the report that the large steamer from Crinan, with all its valuable cargo of Southern tourists, had been drawn into the whirlpool of Corryvreckan, and wrecked on the rocks of Scarba. How such a wild story became current in a town which must be

familiar with the channel, it is difficult to understand; but, as a matter of fact, hour after hour passed, and the steamer did not come in. Next morning, when everyone hurried down to the Quay to learn the news, the safety of the steamer was secured, but various forms of wild stories were being told of perilous escapes and dangers by sea. It eventually turned out that the mate of the steamer had sighted some smack or similar sailing vessel drifting towards Corryvreckan; that he, with a couple of men, put off in a boat and overtook her, found her a derelict, and towed, or endeavoured to tow, her back to the steamer, while the passengers were probably repaid by the excitement of the chase for their being kept two or three hours late in getting to Oban. So that Corryvreckan is still believed in amongst its nearest neighbours.

Mr. Brown came aft abruptly.

"Take this gun," he said.

The Member for Slow, who was contemplatively smoking a very large meerschaum, while his right hand rested on the tiller, and his eyes were leisurely scanning the long sweep of blue water before us, looked up with amazement. Mr. Brown gave the breech-loader to the Glasgow bailie—who handled it nervously, as a bachelor handles a baby—and said, with decision:

"This is a good opportunity, I think, for my entering into that question of the salaries now given to our clerks in the Customs. In such a matter delay only breeds discontent; and the Government, I am sure, will not be sorry to have the subject calmy, fully, and accurately placed before them by a private member."

Mr. Brown went down into his state-room, with quite a look of earnestness on his face. Presently he reappeared with a bundle of papers in his hand; and then, going towards the taffrail, he proceeded to open the parcel and place on the deck a series of documents, partly written, partly printed, and apparently largely consisting of figures. As they lay there, he gazed at them for a moment; but it was clear that his position was not a pleasant one. He changed from the taffrail to a camp-stool; and again from the camp-stool to a seat on the deck; but it was obvious he could not quite suit himself as to a proper position. At last he said he would go below, so as to have his papers properly spread out before him.

"And yet," he said, pensively, "isn't it a shame to go below in this weather? You know we shall have plenty of wet days in which we shall be unable to do anything but work indoors, eh, Weyland?"

"Of course," said the Conservative member, "when you are on a cruise in Scotland, you are always safe in laying up something for a rainy day."

Mr. Brown packed up his papers, and took them below. When he came on deck again, he was quite cheerful, and even humorous, and proposed that he should take the helm, to which Mr. Weyland consented, on condition that his friend should give the necessary directions in case the wind should come round on the starboard quarter.

"I know what to do in a cutter," said Mr. Brown, timidly.

"Oh," said Weyland, "you know how to slack off the boom guy, haul in the mainsheet till you get the boom amidships, port the helm, jibe the mainsail; then slack off the mainsheet again, you know, hook the guy on the port side, haul taut the starboard runner and tackle, and overhaul the port one; same with the topping lift, hoist the head sails, and shift the sheets over."

"After that," said Mr. Brown, "I suppose I'd better throw myself over, too, and complete the thing. If you were to treat a yacht like that, there would not be a tooth left in its head. However, you may keep the tiller, Weyland. It is the only work I ever see you at, and when the rainy weather

comes, goodness only knows how you will pass the time. I know I shall never come away again without having something to do during those odd moments of leisure that you meet in travelling. It's a sort of mainstay, you know—gives you a sense that you are not altogether idling when you have this work to fall back on. And especially when the work is of a character to remedy a great injustice, and give pleasure to a considerable number of your fellow-beings—then, I say, you feel proud that you cannot be taunted with the mere self-seeking indolence of the holiday-maker."

By this time we had run northward by Luing, and Easdale, and Loch Feochan, and were standing in towards the Sound of Kerrara. Twilight was now falling over the islands and the sea, and only a faint show of red in the west showed where the sunset had been. When at length we cast anchor in Oban Bay, pale points of stars were beginning to glimmer on the water, and over there at Kerrara the white ridge of the moon was rising behind the black outline of the island, promising us a lovely night.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OPPORTUNITY AT LAST.

OBAN, as you see it in the dawn of a summer's morning, is fair and beautiful to look upon. In the daytime you find that the capital of the western Highlands, which enthusiastic Scotchmen prefer to Biarritz, or Nice, or Naples, or any other place they do not happen to have seen, consists mainly of a row of dirty-white houses, stretching round a semi-circular bay, the waters of which have, at certain states of the tide, an ancient and fish-like smell. There are no promenades, avenues, or pleasure-grounds; the chief thoroughfare being the street along the quay, which fronts the shops. Towards the west, however, there are a few villas picturesquely perched up on the side of the hills that lie behind the town, and down near the shore there are one or two big hotels. All these things, including the squalor about the quay, are transfigured by the early sunlight; and more especially if you are well out in the bay, and looking shoreward, Oban, when seen through the golden mist that floods

down upon it from over the eastern hills, has something fine and picturesque about its position, and almost rises to its reputation. For there are green hills and grey crags around it which cannot be made common-place, and you have only to turn from the plain houses and the shops to find yourself looking out on the perpetual wonder and loveliness of the blue sea, with the rounded mountains of Mull showing a hundred tints of purple and rose-colour, and the gloomy hills of Morven waking up from the mists of the night to catch the first yellow glimmerings of the sun.

We found the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh pensively kicking his heels over the gunwale of the Kittiwake. He had been awakened by the throbbing of the paddles of some great steamer, and had gone on deck to have a look at the new district into which he had ventured. He had been up for nearly two hours, had done nothing, and was a little peevish. He said some disrespectful things about Oban, which need not be repeated.

After breakfast, however, the amiable nature of his disposition asserted itself; and as he leaned his back against the ratlines, and calmly smoked a cigar, he began to approve of Oban, of the Highlands, of yachting. He even hinted to the Member for Slow that Conservatism had its good points. He

told the Glasgow bailie that the Scotch should be proud of their mountains and lochs. He hoped the Queen would soon get better. Then he proposed we should all go ashore, have a look at Oban, and walk across to Dunstaffnage Castle.

Mr. Brown himself steered the gig into the quay, and managed it so cleverly as to receive a compliment, which he accepted gravely. Indeed, when we had got on shore to inspect Oban, the practised eye might have detected the least thing of a lurch in Mr. Brown's walk, as of a man who had been accustomed to pace the quarter-deck. His dress, too, was rather nautical in appearance, so that at this moment he might have had his portrait taken as Admiral Brown, M.P. But he never ventured to say anything about shivering his timbers; and as for a hornpipe, Mr. Brown's waist had disappeared about the time that the great Reform Bill was passed.

The few miles of road from Oban to Dunstaffnage led us through the most charming variety of scenery, beginning with a stretch of deep umbrageous wood, and thereafter taking us out into the daylight, and skirting the base of a series of wild and heathery hills. Something less than half way we reached a small fresh-water lake, girt round about by sedges in which Mr. Brown declared there

must be moor-hens. Occasionally we met a group of the small and picturesque Highland cattle which are a godsend to the landscape painter; and so thoroughly had those small-headed, rough-coated, and sharp-horned brutes acquired the independent notions of their native land, that our companion the Glasgow bailie regarded with some trepidation their attitude, as they stood in the middle of the road and firmly looked at the strangers. Mr. Brown, however, was brave with the courage of ignorance. He had never been chased down a hill-side by a "stot," or landed in a burn by the horns of a wicked little bull; and so, with the utmost confidence he charged and routed the various phalanxes that opposed our progress, and scarcely walked any the more proudly because of his victory.

In due time we came once more in sight of the sea, lying dark and blue along the lonely shores of Ossian's Morven. Nearer at hand lay the green island of Lismore, with here and there a nameless lump of dark rock jutting out of the rippling water around it. But when we got further towards the west, so that we saw the magnificent line of jagged mountains stretching all along the northern horizon, the enthusiasm of Mr. Brown could not be expressed in words. There were great white clouds floating rapidly over so that every moment the

colours of the mountains were changing, and while the sunlight fell here and there among the peaks that rise in Morven and Appin, far beyond Loch Etive and up by Glencoe, some mighty mass of rock would grow dark and near, as if cowering under a thunder-cloud. Here and there, too, we could see some of those black clouds break into a grey fleece of rain and quietly erase a mountain from the picture; and then, again, its green sides would come glimmering through the wet, and a faint rainbow would appear to touch the thin line of lake at the mountain's foot.

At length we got down to the sea, and to the rocky headland on which stand the massive ruins of Dunstaffnage.

"To tell you the truth," said Mr. Brown, "I do not care for ruins—I do not care for anything—when I can turn to this wonderful picture of the sea and mountains and lochs. The more I look at it, the more I am inclined to register an awful vow never to return to a town again. Why should a man devote himself to the public good until he is just ready to drop into his coffin? I have done my share. I have a great mind never to return to London, but to have a small house built on this very promontory, and live here within the sound of the sea—until—until the time comes when I shall

hear no more sounds. Besides what use am I—except to make one of a majority that is already so big as to make the Ministry a deal too cheeky? If we had a struggling Government, do you think we should have had all that hocus pocus about Epping Forest? Well, after all, you want independent members to look after those things. Perhaps I should better fulfil my duty by going back into the old track. I venture to hope that some of my countrymen owe something to my efforts in Parliament; and I know that in this matter of the Customs Clerks' grievances, I am working towards a most praiseworthy end. Forgive my talking about myself, Weyland, but I have often remarked that the sight of mountains and the sea—of the great powers of nature—forces on a man questions about his own position, and causes him to review his relations with the world. Thank you; the last was as good a cigar as a man ever smoked."

My friend was rather reserved and thoughtful during the walk to Oban, but he brightened up after dinner, and proposed we should go on shore to play a game of billiards at the hotel. As the gig slowly cleft its way through the dark water, the blades of the oar shedding gleams of phosphoric fire on each side, Mr. Brown remarked that both moon and stars were invisible. Indeed, before

we reached the shore, a few drops of rain were falling.

"Is not that most fortunate?" said he. "Just as I was beginning to accuse myself of idleness, there comes the wet day which will enable me to get some work done. To-morrow—yes, to-morrow—I will redeem the promises I have made to myself—and so, Weyland, let us have a merry evening; and you will give me 30 in 100, and I will play you for a sovereign."

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM OBAN TO JURA.

WHERE was the rain? Were we really in the Highlands? When breakfast called us into the saloon the sun was shining down through the painted colours of the skylight, and throwing streaks of crimson and blue on the decorated sides of the cabin. Mr. Brown, M.P., professed himself profoundly disgusted. He regarded the sunlight as if it were his mortal enemy.

"Another day handed over to idleness," he remarked, with a beautiful affectation of anger; "for, you know, Weyland, a man cannot be expected to stop downstairs in this hot weather, and study a batch of figures. You can't do it. I say you can't do it. I am sure that matter of the salaries of those unfortunate Customs Clerks wants serious inquiry; but how can you go into it on a broiling day, and in the limited space which even your handsome saloon affords?"

Indeed, when we got up on deck, the rain, for which Mr. Brown declared himself so anxious,

seemed further off than ever. The Kittiwake was already speeding away southward from Oban, her tall white sails filled with a brisk westerly breeze, and overhead there was a dark blue sky that had its light reflected in the ruffled plain that lay all around us. Out before us—for we went round Kerrara before going south—the lofty mountains of Mull were gradually becoming more distinct, until we could see the glimmering of streams in the deep gullies, and here and there a small white cottage along the lonely shores. In our wake stretched the far-reaching arms of Loch Etive and Loch Linnhe—long blue creeks lying underneath the wild mountains of Morven and Appin, and embracing the lower and greener hills of Lismore. It was a fair and beautiful picture—the brisk blue ripple of the water, the innumerable islands, the flocks of sea-birds floating on the waves or dashing this way and that against the westerly winds, while up in the north stood the calm and silent rampart of the mountains, touched here and there with the shadow of a cloud.

"There is no sign of rain," remarked Mr. Brown, scanning the horizon with a wistful glance. "That haze you see along the mountains is never accompanied by rain, and yet there was rain last night."

He turned with a well-simulated sigh to light a cigar, and then he caught sight of a bundle of newspapers that had been brought on board that morning. Lazily he opened them; but suddenly he announced to us, in a voice of astonishment, that the Lords had thrown out the Ballot Bill. Weyland, sitting by the tiller, looked up. I became apprehensive of a skirmish between the Member for Slow and the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh.

"Poor old things," said Mr. Brown, with an accent of contemptuous tenderness. "I don't wonder at their being in a hurry for their holidays; and nobody ought to grudge them the sense of importance with which they will now go down into the country. It will be something to keep up the spirits of the amiable old gentlemen as they drive about the country roads in closed-up old-fashioned yellow chariots, and answer with a paralytic nod the salutations of the farmers. I hope the old gentlemen will keep up their system and get strong. They will want some strength of digestion next Session for the operation known as eating the leek."

The wrath on Weyland's face was terrible to look upon, and he was fairly speechless with rage. The Glasgow bailie turned from the one to the other with uneasy glances, probably fearing that Mr. Weyland might in the recklessness of passion

shoot the Kittiwake high and dry on the nearest island.

"Perhaps," said the Member for Slow, with a wild and ghastly effort to accomplish a smile, "you will introduce a Bill for the removal of the House of Lords to Hanwell. Or perhaps you'd have them sent to a pauper school to teach them how to write their own names."

"Most of 'em can't," said Mr. Brown coolly. He was trying to make out whether a certain big bird, down near Ardincaple Point, was a gull or a solan.

"I am not surprised at anything that is done by the Liberal party," said Mr. Weyland hotly, "when I hear the perfectly reckless and inconsiderate way in which individual members talk of the most vital institutions of the country—as if they were mere foot-balls to be kicked about for the convenience of a Premier or the amusement of a session. I do not know whether it is thoughtlessness or ignorance——"

"It's a solan!" exclaimed Mr. Brown.

The bird had gone down with a sudden rush, and we could see the water leap thirty feet into the air after the fierce plunge. Then the snow-white long-winged solan rose once more, made one or two slow circles, and finally came sailing up towards the

north. Mr. Brown darted down to the cabin; and presently reappeared with a double-barrelled breech-loader in his hand.

"If I could only get one of those magnificent birds," said he, "I'd give up the notion of making a collection. When you have got the King, you do not care about the Court."

And, in truth, this particular solan, forgetting the shyness of its tribe, seemed determined to give Mr. Brown a chance. It flew at a great height, but it came slowly up in a direct line across the boat. Mr. Brown's eyes were fixed with a painful anxiety on the slow pinions of the gannet as it came nearer and nearer; and he was heard to whisper an agitated question as to whether a swan-shot cartridge would reach that height. None of us dared answer him; even Weyland had forgotten the cruelties heaped on the House of Lords in the excitement caused by the approach of the solan. Mr. Brown stealthily put up the gun to his shoulder—just as if he were some fat old sportsman in the Black Forest nervously expecting the appearance of a roebuck. So dazzling was the clear blue that it was difficult to follow the slow flight of the large bird; and it seemed to be overhead while yet Mr. Brown would not fire. Mr. Weyland began to be agitated about the safety of the rigging, and would probably have

interposed but that the startling bang of Mr. Brown's right barrel told us that the great event was decided one way or the other.

"I have shot him—I have killed him—I have smashed him up!" shouted the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, with the most unstatesmanlike and unsportsmanlike eagerness. Certainly the bird had disappeared to leeward. Mr. Brown sprang behind the mainsail, and lo! some hundred yards ahead, an immense white thing floated on the water. He shouted that the bird was dead. He implored Weyland to get a small boat ready. He gave various orders, couched in the language of Cockaigne, to the astonished sailors, who had been regarding the falling solan with little interest. And then, in the middle of all this turmoil, a loud laugh was heard from Weyland, and the solan was seen to flutter up from the water and continue its flight.

Despair fell over the countenance of my amiable friend. He did not utter a word; but he was calmly relinquishing himself to his fate, when the solan was seen to "tower" for a few yards. Mr. Brown apparently imagined that this natural phenomenon was but the beginning of a long excursion on the part of the solan, and was, indeed, turning away in disgust, when the bird fell straight

into the water, and floated on the waves a lifeless and dishevelled mass of feathers. Some few minutes afterwards, Mr. Brown was regarding with inexpressible delight and wonder the monster of the deep which lay before him, with its snow-white wings extended on the deck. He called our attention to the beautiful colours on its long and powerful beak, to the shading on its legs, to the immense breadth of its wings. One of the men further gratified Mr. Brown by informing him that the wings of the solan were sometimes found to be seven feet across, and that no other bird so much resembled an albatross. The hero of the hour regarded his prize with a new interest—there were wild and poetical associations about this magnificent creature that he had brought down. It was with some hesitation that he allowed it to be taken below, Weyland giving orders that it should be packed and forwarded to Glasgow by the first steamer they could intercept. Mr. Brown hoped they were able to stuff large birds in Glasgow.

The slaughter of the solan was a fortunate thing for us all. Mr. Brown's geniality, in consequence of his exploit, was excessive; nothing could exceed his politeness, his good-nature, and his efforts to amuse us. He doubtless felt that we ought all to share in his joy, and he even went the

length of tendering a formal apology to Mr. Weyland for his remarks about the House of Lords, which the Member for Slow accepted with one of his prodigious laughs. And so, in this delightful state of affairs, the long summer day passed pleasantly, and we gradually drew down towards Jura, keeping well outside the island of Garveloch and Scarba. Here we experienced a rather heavy sea; but the Kittiwake conducted herself with propriety, and Mr. Brown, though he was occasionally silent and solemn, never had to go below.

Out to windward lay the desolate-looking islands of Colonsay and Oronsay, amid the ceaseless wash of the Atlantic. Why that lengthy ballad of Dr. Leyden should have taken such hold of my friend from the South, it was impossible to say; but he continued to gaze on the bleak and distant shores of Colonsay all the time we were creeping along the coast of Jura. And when at last we anchored in Loch Tarbert, and found almost over our heads the immense and gloomy peaks that are known to fishermen as the Paps of Jura, we could see that the "Song of Colonsay" was still sounding its melancholy refrain in the ears of Mr. Brown. But whenever he grew too sad, the least mention of the solan woke him up into life again; and all that evening, as we sate on deck, and smoked,

and watched the stars glimmering on the sea around us that was black as night with the shadows of the mountains, his talk was of the wonders of the deep that are known to sailors, and of the rough sports and enjoyments that might be got at if one were only young enough to become a middy.

CHAPTER IX.

DEER-STALKING IN JURA.

A COLD grey mist was rising off the bay, and masses of watery-looking clouds were slowly creeping up the dark sides of the mountains, when Mr. Brown, M.P., stepped on deck and took his accustomed glance round, apparently to see if there was a chance of rain. The prospect was gloomy. The waters of the sound were rough and grey; Islay was half hidden in mist; and overhead there was a dense pall of vapour through which the sun could not pierce. Despite the fact that the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh had been longing for rain, in order that he might devote himself to the question of the Customs Clerks' grievances, he did not seem pleased to find it so near. He looked at the clean deck and spars of the Kittiwake, and complained that a yacht looked clammy on a cold morning. With a morose sort of poetry he compared her to a sea-bird floating on the water in time of rain, with her wings folded closely up, and her appearance dejected. He remarked that

there was much gloomy grandeur about the Jura mountains; but that, once you had seen them, there was no use in remaining under their cold and oppressive shadows. He observed that the Sound of Jura was a melancholy piece of water; and was of opinion that the Hebrides generally seemed a sterile region, visited by fogs and rains and the cold wash of the sea.

But a great surprise was in store for my friend. While we were regarding the desolate prospect around us, the gig of the Kittiwake was observed to be coming out from the shore; and in the stem sat Mr. Weyland, himself. There was a bluff satisfaction in his face. He sprang up the gangway quite lightly, and slapped Mr. Brown on the back.

"You've heard me speak of Maclean of Hulishtaveg?" he said.

"No, I have not," replied Mr. Brown, coldly; for he did not like to be slapped on the back.

"No matter, he sends you his compliments in very good English, and offers you as much red deer shooting as you like, and says you will find men, dogs, and guns awaiting us up at Glen-cona an hour hence."

"Red deer!" exclaimed Mr. Brown, with an awe-struck look.

And with that he darted down the companion

to see if breakfast was laid. He implored us to make haste. He scalded his mouth with coffee. He said it would have been hard if we had gone away from the Hebrides without slaying a red deer, and talked with such animation and excitement about that noble sport, and about the grandeur of this lonely island of Jura, and of the more than royal hospitality exercised by the brave and courteous Highland gentlemen who live in those wilds, that we half expected to see tears of admiration start into his eyes. Weyland improved the time by detailing the qualifications of the deer-stalker—how that he must have the eye of a hawk, the pertinacity of a sleuth-hound, the footing of a chamois —how that he must be brave and patient, nimble and agile, and prepared to suffer any privation. We observed that as Mr. Brown rose to go up on deck before us, he buttoned his coat tightly round what was once a waist, erected his head, and assumed a look of bright and sharp activity. His efforts to improve his figure, however, were a failure.

It took us nearly an hour to reach the little white cottage which had been pointed out to us as Glen-cona—a solitary building, perched up on an open space of morass which led the way into a deep gap between the hills. Not only were the

gillies and dogs in readiness, but the Maclean himself—a tall and spare-built man, with long white hair and flowing beard—had come up from his house to receive his friend's friends. This he did with a simple and yet stately courtesy which greatly impressed Mr. Brown, who subsequently informed us that he could not help thinking the old man with the white beard, and the lofty manners and the peculiar inflection of English, was a descendant of Ossian. Hulishtaveg was not in the kilt, but his gillies were—the big, weather-tanned men who stood silently by, except when they rebuked one of the shaggy and splendid-looking deerhounds, and who received from their master a glass of whisky, which was no great length of time in reaching its destination. When the Maclean had given the men certain instructions in what was apparently graphic and forcible Gaelic, he bade us farewell in a few words of very fair English, and took his departure.

Weyland now impressed on the head keeper that everything was to be done to give Mr. Brown a shot—that he was to be considered the chief of the party. When the swarthy and bearded Highlander was at length made to understand this, he simply laid hold of Mr. Brown and treated him as if he were a child, with a quiet, good-natured patronage that my friend knew not how to resent.

In the first place, he insisted on the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh leaving behind him a white coat which he wore, and putting on instead a brown jacket which one of the gillies was ordered to strip off his shoulders. Mr. Brown objected, but his protestations were of no avail.

"Cash pless me!" said the keeper, "it will pe for no use if you go up sa hill wi' a big, white, starin' coat on, that will pe seen through the length and sa preadth o' Jura. Wass you neffer after sa deer afore?"

Mr. Brown had to confess that he had never before hunted the wild deer or followed the roe; whereupon the big keeper helped my friend into the gillie's jacket, and slung a telescope over his shoulder, and bound a cartridge-belt round his waist; but the rifle which was apportioned to him was handed over to one of the men. Then we set out. Mr. Brown grinned a ghastly grin over his costume and accoutrements; but he was evidently feeling a little nervous.

For the first part of our journey our way lay along a marshy hollow that formed the base of two hills. Not a word was spoken; there was nothing to break the profound stillness of this solitary glen; we could not even hear a stream trickling down the mountain-side. Then after a long and patient

tramp, we began to ascend the hill—in some places so steep that our hands were about as serviceable as our feet. What with hopping over bits of bog, and climbing over rocks, and working through heather, Mr. Brown was looking rather exhausted as we neared the summit; but here a halt was called, and the plan of operations stealthily formed.

The Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh now became the hero of the hour, for it was to him that the keeper chiefly addressed, in cautious whispers, certain directions as to what should be done. These two, indeed, now left the party, and slowly and silently climbed up to a ridge of rock that no doubt commanded the valley beyond. Both were prone on the heather and apparently motionless, when the keeper, having slowly swept the space before him with his glass, touched Mr. Brown's arm and indicated that he should look in a particular direction. What was the meaning of that next abrupt movement? Mr. Brown had hastily dropped his telescope, and took up his rifle; but the keeper instantly seized the latter, took it off the rock, and turned to his companion with a look of anger and surprise.

"Cash pless me!" we heard him exclaim in an excited whisper, "Wass you going to fire? Sa stag iss a mile away and more, and a' sa hinds are

watchin' up by sa burn. You will have to go down sa hill again, and along sa glen, and up by sa burn,—it will be three miles you will go afore you wass to get near him."

But nothing would daunt Mr. Brown, now that he had seen his quarry. In mingled trepidation and excitement he came back and told us upon what an awful venture he was setting out. We agreed to watch his progress from the ambush on the top of the hill; while he and the keeper and a gillie with the dogs went off on their circuit so as to get at the stag. He left us his telescope, and took with him our blessing.

More than an hour elapsed before we caught sight of them, and then we made out three tiny figures stealing along the opposite hill-side. A sharp and deep little glen lay between them and the open space where the stag was quietly browsing; and it was evident that the success of the expedition depended on Mr. Brown being able to get into this glen and up again without attracting the attention of his prey. A grave and watchful gillie who followed every movement with intensest interest expressed his opinion that the "shentleman tit not know much of sa shooting and would pe sure to make a noise among sa rocks." At length we saw Mr. Brown, creeping on hands and knees, gain the

edge of the ravine and disappear. The stag still stood about thirty yards from the other side of the glen, in an open space where there were some grey rocks among the heather, while two or three hinds were on a grassy plateau above him, walking about and occasionally nibbling the herbage. Our excitement was now so great that no one spoke. A dead silence prevailed. Suddenly there was a light pattering heard near us, and the next moment a hind came cantering down in front of us. The moment she saw us a sort of paralysis seemed to overtake her. She halted for one second, all her limbs quivering; then she was off with the speed of lightning, followed by two hinds and two stags that had been quietly coming on in Indian file. All this had occurred in an instant; and in the same instant Weyland had started up, cocked his rifle, and fired. The gillie fired. The second stag, at which the gillie had shot, gave one spring into the air and tumbled forward lifeless; but the first stag, Weyland's quarry, after having gone down on its foreknees, struggled up again, and was seen to make straight down the hill. "Oh, sa tawgs, sa tawgs, what for had we no sa tawgs wi us, tamernation and diabhol!" shouted the gillie, and then he dashed down the hill-side after the wounded deer, Weyland, himself long-legged and active, vainly

endeavouring to keep up with his extraordinary speed. When they had disappeared, I turned to the other valley, where also the crack of a rifle had been heard. What was that distant and corpulent little figure doing, but waving a handkerchief and dancing a wild fandango of delight, while the gillie was hauling off the hounds that were apparently bent on attacking some brown object lying there? Apparently the man had divined that the dogs might be wanted elsewhere, for presently we saw him disappear with them round the head of the glen, while Mr. Brown, still waving a handkerchief, descended to the burn, crossed over, and slowly began to ascend the hill. Long before he had reached the top he had shouted the joyous news, and when he arrived, speechless, smothered in perspiration, covered with brown moss-water, and dishevelled beyond expression, he reserved his last energies for a wild performance of a Highland reel, and then sank, glorious and happy, on the heather.

"Killed him—killed him—killed him!" he cried, "dead as a stone—big as a house—want two ponies to fetch him home—I'll have him stuffed if I pay a thousand pounds for it!"

"With a gold medal slung round his neck—*Shot by Pisistratus Brown, Esq., M.P., in the mountains of Jura, August*, 1871."

Mr. Brown lay on the heather, took deep draughts of the clear and cool air, and rubbed his hands. Already he pictured to himself the noble animal standing in the hall of a certain house in Holland-park the admiration and wonder of all visitors. He was too much excited, indeed, to give any account of how he had shot the deer, and that did not leak out until Weyland, the head keeper, and the gillie with the dogs had all returned to us. They, too, were in an exultant mood. The hounds had hunted down the wounded stag until they had brought him to bay, and he was found facing them, when Weyland got up in time to give him another bullet. The gillie had brought down a very tolerable stag, but Weyland's prey turned out to be a hart of magnificent proportions, with horns that the keeper described in technical language which considerably puzzled the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh. When we came to ask what sort of horns he had secured, there came the ominous confession that the animal he had shot was not adorned in that way.

"It wass a hind," said the keeper, with some contempt. "Sa stag will pe neffer touched at all."

"But you can't deny it's a deer," said Mr. Brown, almost fiercely, "and if I didn't get the stag, whose fault was it, Donald, or Duncan, or

MacTavish or whatever is your name? Answer me that! The plain story, Weyland, is simply this—that your confounded shooting startled the stag just as I was getting up to the edge. The beggar was off before you could have winked—like a flash of powder—and I saw him join the whole herd of 'em, and off they went. What could I do? By Jove, I banged into the lot of 'em, just as any man would, and you should have seen the cracker that deer went when I caught him——"

"Her," said Weyland, cruelly.

"Her or him, what's the difference? You may talk of spires and harts, and stags and calves; but all I know is I've shot a deer, and as that sort of thing doesn't fall in my way every day, I may confess that I'm uncommonly proud of it, and, with the permission of Allasterbeg, or whatever the mischief you call him, I propose to give these Macdonalds, and Macdougals, and MacTavishes here a sovereign apiece."

Mr. Brown now became anxious that the two ponies which had been sent for should arrive, that we might go down the glen in triumph; but as the day had worn on with our repeated delays, it was resolved to go down quietly to Mr. Maclean's house, and carry him on board the Kittiwake. Hulishtaveg was well pleased with the story of the day's per-

formances, and remarked on the good fortune which had attended what was, after all, an experiment.

"Sa morn's morning," he said to Mr. Brown, "you will pe early afoot, and teil sa fears but you will come home wis a fine good stag—as good as any one in Jura."

"I will get up at three o'clock," said Mr. Brown, eagerly; "and you know, Mr. Maclean, I am a stranger to this sort of thing, and if, after dinner, you could give me a hint or two you know——"

Hulishtaveg gave us after dinner something much better—a Gaelic song about a young person called Maggie, who was asked to marry a certain red-haired William; and this he sung in a shrill, quavering voice that had some faint resemblance to the reediness of the bagpipes.

CHAPTER X.

DEER-DRIVING IN JURA.

THE cold light of the dawn was beginning to steal down into the glens, and there was a faint saffron colour becoming visible in the sky, far over the tops of the mountains, when Mr. Brown, M.P., stood on the deck of the Kittiwake and saw the gig being lowered. Much of the enthusiasm of the previous evening had gone. The visions begotten of Hulishtaveg's stories of deer-stalking, salmon-spearing, and otter-hunting were now cold, and grey, and faint in the clear light of the early morning; and Mr. Brown was no longer ready to scoff at late sleepers, and to expatiate on the delight of getting out of bed while the mists were still in the valleys and the darkness not yet lifted off the far and murmuring plain of the sea. He was very silent, and even gloomy; and, as he sat in the stern of the pinnace, looked wistfully over to the distant shores of Islay, where man and nature seemed still buried in sleep.

The Member for Slow, more accustomed to

sportsman's hours, was, on the contrary, full of facetious humours, and strove to impress on Mr. Brown the awful nature of the excitement experienced by the man who finds deer running by in front of him, while he endeavours to single out the finest hart for his shot. He impressed on his friend, too, the gratitude he owed to Maclean of Hulishtaveg for getting up this drive in his honour —a form of deer-shooting rarely resorted to in Jura on account of the number of men required, and the tendency it has to make the deer wild and frighten them into neighbouring territory.

"I dare say the old man started at 2 o'clock this morning to arrange the drive," remarked Mr. Weyland. "And how would you like going up those wild glens in the middle of the night, with mist-clouds making the most familiar places dangerous to you?"

"I don't see the necessity," said the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, morosely. "You don't expect to catch the deer asleep, do you? And when you turn a man out at four o'clock and thrust him into the raw air of the morning, and make him swallow his breakfast before he has got any appetite, you upset him for the day, that's all. You may call it sport; I call it a mistake. I can get up as early as most men—when there's any need; but to be lugged

out in the middle of the night merely because it's considered fine, and sportsmanlike, and heroic, is a very different thing. I would very much rather have spent the next two hours in studying those grievances of the Customs clerks, and getting some useful work done. However, as that old idiot of a Highlandman, I dare say, has been rampaging about the whole country-side since midnight, I suppose we needn't waste any time in getting up to the starting-point."

It was most ungenerous of Mr. Brown to speak thus of his benefactor, who had not only arranged for him a day's sport such as few men, be they Princes or Cabinet Ministers, are privileged to enjoy, but had also sent down a horse and two ponies for us. The Glasgow bailie was to have accompanied us; but on rousing him about 3.30 he had uttered the most solemn vows that he would see us anywhere before he would budge an inch, so that we had to leave him to his inglorious rest. Accordingly the horse and the ponies carried us picturesquely, if not comfortably, up to Glen-cona, where we found Hulishtaveg, one or two gillies, and the dogs. The rest of the gillies and hillmen had started long before for a district lying considerably beyond that in which we had been successful the day before. No time was to be lost.

We got into the saddle again—Mr. Maclean stoutly resisting Weyland's invitation to change places with him—and set off up the marshy glen that led into the mountains.

In reply to Mr. Brown, Hulishtaveg informed us that we should have a terribly hot day; but in the meantime the morning was clear and rather chilly. There was a rawness in the air around us, although far overhead we could see the sunlight strike the eastward-looking peaks of the mountains. But the jolting of the white pony which he bestrode had brought some warmth into Mr. Brown's frame; and a tolerably lengthy pull at a whisky-flask, which had gone the round of the circle at Glen-cona, had brought more liveliness into his eye and talk. He began to feel more sure about being able to distinguish between a hind and a hart as the deer went by. He was quite certain he would not fire prematurely, and kill some harmless little animal running in front of its mother. He would take the greatest care not to frighten the hinds, so that they might turn and drive back the stags. Not for the world would he spoil sport.

"And, mirover," said old Hulishtaveg, in his shrill and curious English, "it may pe sa stags will come first. When sey get a great fright, sometimes sa stag will come afore sa hinds, espaycially if he

sinks some danger is apout; and all you will do, Mester Prown, iss no to put yoursel' into a hurry, but tek your time—tek your time—and fire weel forrit."

"I'll fire a yard ahead of 'em," said Mr. Brown confidently. "Only give me a chance, and you'll see."

"A chance?" said the old Highlandman rather testily, "no man will pe able to make a chance for you if sa deer will not be inclined to go your way; but sa men knaw as much apoot sa deer as ony men in sa country; and if you do not get a fine, big, braw pair o' horns, it will pe your own fault, sir, neversaless and mirover."

When, at length, we had got within about a mile of our points of ambush we dismounted, and the horse and ponies were left in charge of a small kilted youth. Then the gillies—all but he with the dogs—went off to join in that gentle pressing of the deer in a particular direction, which is a much more difficult business than merely shooting at them when they come to you. The manner in which a few men—keeping themselves, as a rule, invisible—will succeed in driving a herd of deer in a certain line, is most marvellous, and is all the more so that the exploit is so seldom performed. The Maclean himself undertook to post the three

strangers; and when this was done, and we had all received ample instructions and injunctions, the old man departed, rifle in hand, to seek out a corner for himself. His whispered directions were the last sound we heard; then followed the strange and dead stillness that reigned over the broad valley, and we were left to peer anxiously from our hiding-places and await the coming of the deer.

I could see the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh. He was placed behind a rock in a little ravine, which had once been the bed of a stream. He had placed his cap by his side, so that he might peep over the boulders before him, and the shining bald head gleamed like a piece of smooth quartz down among the grey shadows of the schist. He was furnished with a double-barrel breech-loading rifle that Weyland had had made for him in Edinburgh; and he had received the most impressive instructions not to fire within a mile of my station should the deer escape him and come up that way. Weyland, with a gillie and the deer-hounds, was posted, so far as we could make out Hulishtaveg's explanation, on the other side of the hill, in the direction the deer were likely to take if fired at by us.

How long we waited it is impossible to say. It seemed ages, and it was probably hours. At last

there appeared by the side of a lump of rock high up on the opposite hill the flutter of a white handkerchief which was instantly withdrawn—the signal that the deer were in sight. Mr. Brown put the barrels of his gun carefully on the ledge before him.

And then, in the death-like silence, we saw the first of the deer appear. They were two full-grown hinds and a calf, that came lightly and gently cantering over the moss and heather, stopping now and again to look back, with their ears erect, and their long lithe throats arching up their small heads. Presently came three more hinds, in single file, and then two stags, a small one and a large one, the latter with splendid horns. It was an exciting moment; for it was impossible to say which way they might go. They had evidently been alarmed by the gillies somewhere; but to so slight a degree that they trotted gently, and stopped every two or three seconds to look back, which they did with their nostrils high in the air, and their ears thrown forward. A more picturesque group was never painted by Landseer; but what we chiefly thought of, doubtless, was their distance from us.

As we watched them, in this anxious fashion, one of the hinds trotted off to the right and the

others at some distance followed her, one by one. They were now apparently going straight over the opposite hill, and how was one gillie to intercept them? Suddenly we saw him start from his hiding-place, throw his jacket into the air, and halloo at the pitch of his voice. The whole herd now sprung down the hill, and headed down the glen. Here another gillie started from some unknown ambush; and the stags, now in front, turned once more, and made straight for our place of hiding. Now or never was our chance. On they came with those light elastic strides that seemed to skip the ground, the smaller stag now leading. How different was this terrible pace from the slow rumbling of the pasteboard stag at Wimbledon, which Mr. Brown had been declaring the night before he could hit in the heart five times out of six! But if the pace was trying, the line they took was advantageous; and in far less time than it has taken to write these words they were upon us. Bang! went Mr. Brown's first barrel. The smaller stag cleared the rocky channel at one leap, and was making down into the hollow of the glen, when a shot—from a quarter which modesty directs shall be nameless—sent him head first into a patch of long green grass that surrounded a mountain spring. Almost simultaneously with that shot, Mr. Brown fired his second barrel,

and lo! the larger stag did actually stumble forward and then fall heavily on his side. Mr. Brown uttered a startling yell, and dashed down the rocky chasm, over boulders and stones. The stag rose on its fore feet, and again it fell. In vain I shouted to my frantic friend not to go near the deer; for the next moment I saw him aim a blow at the head of his adversary with the butt end of Weyland's valuable rifle. Again and again the excited sportsman flourished his weapon, and then he sat down on the slain deer's neck, and took hold of its antlers, and waved the butt of the rifle over his head.

"Why," said he, when I got up, "did you ever see the like of that? Two stags—one with each barrel!"

I calmly regarded my friend. He blushed a little, and then said, uneasily,

"Do you think you shot the first one?"

"Do you think you shot it!" I asked.

He looked away for a second or two; and then he said, reflectively,

"Perhaps, after all, I may have been mistaken. At all events I can afford to give you that one. I have enough. I wouldn't quarrel with any one about a wretched deer. The man who spoils a day's sport by claiming what isn't his own—bah! I have no patience with him. Well, what is the matter?"

The last words were uttered rather angrily. The fact was that Mr. Brown had put out one of his legs over the fallen deer, but not so artistically as to conceal the fact that the stag had been shot in the hind legs—the ball going through both, and smashing them.

"If you consider," said he, "the pace he was going at, the wonder is that any mortal man could have got near him. I'm not proud. I hit a deer where I can; and I'm satisfied if I kill him. I suppose it isn't every man who can say that out of three shots he killed two deer, eh?"

Indeed, Mr. Brown, M.P., forgot this flaw in his happiness, amid the universal congratulations of his companions. He would not, he said, trouble Mr. Maclean's gillies to go any further that day. He was satisfied. Sport, not indiscriminate slaughter, was his object. And there and then he invited all the gillies to a supper at Glen-cona, and forthwith begged Weyland to lend him a dozen of champagne. Of that supper, which came off about eight o'clock, it is impossible to speak here. Certainly no more strange, and motley, and picturesque gathering was ever before summoned to drink dry sillery amid the dusky solitudes of Jura.

CHAPTER XI.

GROUSE-SHOOTING IN JURA.

It is not every day that a Highland laird has the opportunity of entertaining two members of our Imperial Legislature; and whether it was that circumstance, or merely the amiable temperament of Mr. Brown, M.P., that affected Hulishtaveg, certain it is that the chieftain was excessively courteous to us. Not content with allowing the strangers from the Kittiwake to slay his deer, he now proposed that the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh should undertake a day's grouse shooting. Mr. Brown regarded this invitation with a complacent serenity. It was a compliment to his powers as a sportsman. It is true he spoke in rather a contemptuous tone about grouse. The man who was able to bring down a stag at full speed might be pardoned for considering the whole grouse family, even including the capercailzie, as rather small game. But Mr. Brown was not proud. He thanked the Maclean with a gracious politeness, and said he would go on the next morning, if it did not rain.

"A trap o' rain will not do much harm," said the old Highlander, unnecessarily taking a look round the horizon, on which all the evidences of settled weather were apparent. "You wass very fortunate, mirover, wis your two days at sa deer. You will not expect to have aye such goot weather among sa Jura hills."

"But you don't understand, Mr. Maclean," said my friend, gravely. "A Member of Parliament, whether he be in the Cabinet or a mere outsider, never wholly gets rid of his duties by leaving town. A portion of his leisure, at least, he owes to his countrymen. And I am now investigating a most important question, with a view to remedying a great grievance—that, namely, of the capricious and unsatisfactory manner in which salaries are awarded to her Majesty's clerks of Customs in the East of London and elsewhere. Should a change in the weather occur I must devote myself to this matter, grouse or no grouse, red deer or no red deer."

"Oh, ferry well, ferry well," said old Hulish-taveg, "no goot will come to sa man who neglects his pusiness for his amusements, mirover."

On this occasion there was no picturesque procession of ponies and gillies, for our beat began about half a mile from the bay in which the Kitti-

wake was moored. Most of this half mile lay round the shore; and Mr. Brown—as he listened vaguely to Weyland's comparison of the virtues of pointers and setters—let his eye rove over the blue expanse of sea that lay smooth and still around the coasts of Islay. The Sound, that is generally swept by currents of wind coming down the gorge between the Jura mountains and the Islay shore, was almost glass-like. There was scarcely a breath of wind, and it was apparent that we should have warm work of it on the moors.

"Why here is Mr. Maclean again," said Mr. Brown, as we neared the trysting-place. "The old man seems to think we could not start without his coming to see us off, and give us a glass of whisky. I wonder if he thinks a Member of Parliament an extraordinary creature."

I ventured to hint to Mr. Brown that Hulishtaveg's courtesy took its rise in the immemorial traditions of his class, and was not dictated by a profound reverence for the British Parliament. Doubtless, however, the old man was not displeased to see his name in the Edinburgh and Glasgow papers as the host of the representatives of two important English boroughs.

Hulishtaveg wished us good luck, and then we set off for the base of the nearest hill, accompanied

by two gillies, a boy, two brace of setters, a pointer and a retriever. The head keeper explained to us that this pointer, which had been presented to Hulishtaveg by an English gentleman, was a steady old dog that was likely to be of excellent service to the central gun, when the setters were ranging rather widely. Mr. Brown remarked that he did not care with what sort of dog he shot. He was also indifferent as to whether he were placed on the right, or on the left, or in the middle. He put a couple of cartridges into the barrels of his breech-loader, flung the gun up on his shoulder with quite a jaunty air, and stalked forward erect and confident.

Indeed, Mr. Brown lost none of this ease of manner when a brace of the setters were uncoupled and we began to move cautiously along a piece of swampy ground lying at the base of a slope of heather.

"Those setters have been badly trained," he remarked, with a cool air. "They are wild. They will put up the birds out of shot. I can foresee that they will. When once we reach the drier ground, where the grouse are sure to be——"

He never finished the sentence. Old Dan the pointer, who had given himself but one or two brief preliminary scampers, was suddenly seen to curb

his pace; and then, after carefully advancing a few yards, he became motionless. As we quickly and stealthily went up to him, he moved not a muscle of his rigid frame—his neck and head stretched forward, his tail stiff as a rod behind, his fore leg hanging motionless in the air. As we got near him, he began to draw on the birds; and, knowing that grouse run swiftly when caught in grassy cover, we were looking well forward, when a magnificent whirr almost underneath Dan's nose was followed by a hurried bang from Mr. Brown's gun. A heap of feathers tumbled on to the ground; and my excitable friend—forgetting the example he was showing to the dogs—rushed madly towards the spot, caught the bird, and flourished it in the air.

But there was one man more excited than Mr. Brown, and that was the keeper. In his first alarm and rage at seeing my companion put up his gun to shoot a black-cock, he had yelled out in Gaelic, and now, in the same language, he was expostulating with Mr. Brown on the appalling nature of his conduct, while Weyland had positively to sit down on a tuft of heather to give vent to prodigious roars of laughter. Mr. Brown looked deeply hurt.

"What have I done?" he said.

In the mildest manner Weyland pointed out that

he had fired at a bird which, had it been a grouse, would have belonged to me; that he had killed a black-cock after being warned that the time for shooting that animal had not arrived; and that he had acted in a manner sufficient to have demoralised the best setters or pointers ever bred and trained.

"But, at all events, I have killed the bird," said Mr. Brown gloomily.

He moved forward with less gaiety of demeanour now. The setters which, in spite of his example, had dropped very prettily when the bird rose, now recommenced their light and active labours, and the grave and more cautious Dan, keeping nearer at home, worked the ground between them in a most satisfactory manner. We were now getting up the hill towards a level plateau, and were near the brow of the ascent when we flushed our first covey. They rose to Mr. Brown's side, perhaps at a distance of about twenty yards, and after a start caused by the sudden noise, and a stumbling about the stock of the gun, as if it had caught in his waistcoat, we were surprised to see the long steel barrels pointing in the direction of the now disappearing grouse, and Mr. Brown pulling at the trigger, without a vestige of sound following. Then, with a fearful exclamation of anger, my companion took

down the breech-loader and looked at it. He had forgotten to put in a cartridge in place of the one fired at the black cock—indeed, the hammer was still down on the barrel. Weyland did not laugh this time; he was too much annoyed. Mr. Brown's moroseness deepened, and we went on.

One or two members of the covey had loitered behind in the heather on the brow of the hill. Of these a brace fell to Weyland's gun, and one bird, getting up out of shot, made after its companions. There we resolved on following, but taking care to miss nothing on the way.

It appeared that the covey had been well scattered, for we had just rounded one shoulder of the hill, when up got a fine bird from under a big mass of rock that jutted out from the hill-side. This, also, was Mr. Brown's bird, but two barrels sent after him scarcely caused him to swerve from his course, and we could see the sunlight shimmering on his outstretched and tremulous wings as he sailed round the entrance into the next valley. Weyland said nothing. Mr. Brown was silent. But as we once more moved on, the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, apparently grown reckless, began to hum carelessly, "A life on the Ocean Wave."

"I wish you'd stop that row, and give other

people a chance, if you can't shoot yourself," said Weyland, half in joke and half in irritated earnest.

"At all events," said Mr. Brown, stopping short and drawing himself up, "at all events, I expected to go shooting with gentlemen."

"Gentlemen be hanged!" said the Member for Slow; and at the same moment one of the setters came to a point. The other setter creeping forward a little too jealously, the birds sprang up. Four of them fell; the fifth went straight past Mr. Brown, at a distance of about thirty-five yards, and sailed across the valley to the opposite mountain.

"Why didn't you fire?" asked Weyland of Mr. Brown, when the retriever had brought back one of the birds that had only been winged.

Mr. Brown did not answer. He glanced carelessly round, as if admiring the warm tints of the hills, and the effect of the sunlight on the rocks and heather. Then he said, with a slight air of contempt,—

"I do not see the attractions of a sport that is marked by indiscriminate slaughter, and by a good deal of ill-temper. I do not desire to be proficient in it. I can dispense with the fame of being an accomplished butcher of harmless birds. You may think it fine to kill grouse in that fashion; but I would as soon shoot pigeons at Hurlingham."

"Shoot at them, you mean," said Mr. Weyland, cruelly; and then the Member for Slow went over to his friend, and pacified him, and apologized to him, and got him into a good humour. This incident took up a little time; but the fact was that the terrible heat which was now beating down made such stoppages far from ungrateful. Even Donald, the keeper, remarked with a sigh, as he mopped his face with his weather-beaten bonnet, "It iss a most terriple warm tay, as ever wass seen." The *redintegratio amoris* between the two faithful friends who had fallen out was marked by the passing round of a flask of Lagavulin, and again we urged on our wild career.

Certainly, there was no lack of sport. The birds were plentiful, far from wild, and we were lucky enough to get the coveys well broken up, and odd birds scored down, before attacking new districts. But Mr. Brown never recovered from the demoralization of his first mistakes. After failing altogether to fire at one or two birds that offered him easy shots, he was counselled to wake up his spirits by a dose of that mellow liquid which had its origin in the island lying over there in the blue sea. It is to be feared that the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh took the advice too much to heart, or it may have been that the Lagavulin had

an unusual effect on a system weakened by the extreme heat, by disappointment, and despair. Mr. Brown, M.P., took two deep draughts from his own particular flask, and thereupon declared that the day was but young yet. He had made some blunders, doubtless; but his hand was out. He said there was nothing more beautiful than to see a setter work the side of a hill in the stillness of the midday sun.

Mr. Brown had just made this remark—in an unnecessarily loud voice—when, some distance ahead, a large black cock got up with a prodigious clatter, and betook himself to the heights above. Mr. Brown jumped, but did not put up his gun. "Well done!" said Weyland, approvingly. Alas! the very next moment there rose a grey hen, and Mr. Brown, being deceived by the colour, fired hastily. What was our astonishment to see the bird—which was certainly fifty yards off—drop like a stone! When Mr. Brown was told what he had done, he took no more shame to himself. He snapped his fingers, and uttered a fiendish laugh.

"Black cock, white cock," he said, gaily, "red grouse or grey grouse, ptarmigan, snipe, capercailzie, or stags a hundred feet high, I'll kill 'em all—I'll kill 'em all!"

The Member for Slow regarded his friend with a stupified air.

"Come along," said Mr. Brown lightly. "What's the use of drawing fine distinctions? We're outraging all humanitarian notions in making the killing of birds an amusement, and we may as well go in for unbridled licence. What can a few days matter to a black cock? Come along—let's have plenty of shooting—at anything! Wake 'em up, old MacPhairson, or MacDuncan, or whatever they call you. Ha!"

And bang went Mr. Brown's gun at a fine cock grouse which his loud talking had put up almost out of range. Yet again the reckless Member of Parliament brought down his quarry; and again he uttered a wild laugh of triumph.

"You can't deny that's a grouse, can you?" he exclaimed, fiercely thrusting in another cartridge. "Forward, you chieftain of the clan MacGillie Callum! I will slay every wild animal in the island of Jura before I have done with you."

The success of Mr. Brown was truly surprising; but it was not to be wondered at that no one else got a shot. His jubilant cries and his urging on of the dogs—in spite of the angry expostulations of Mr. Weyland, and the plaintive remonstrances of the keeper—put up the birds at extraordinary distances

while his luck in firing recklessly at them was marvellous. The more disgusted his companions were, the more wildly Mr. Brown laughed, until we wondered what demon out of *Der Freischütz* had transformed the ordinarily quiet and amiable Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh. At last he flung himself down on the heather, placed his gun beside him, and waved his cap over his head.

"How many have I killed, slain, mangled, and extirpated? A hundred brace, if I have touched a feather! And you say I can't shoot, you counter-jumpers, who can't touch a bird unless you're near enough to put salt on his tail. I'll tell you what I'll do with you, merely to give you a chance. I shall stop here and smoke a cigar for an hour or so, and you can come back this way. Donald, Dougal, Duncan, or Alexander MacTavish, you leave those hordes of slain here, and go on with the dogs!"

When we returned that way, some two hours thereafter, Mr. Brown, M.P., was fast asleep on the hill-side, his cap over his face, and his head surrounded by a halo of killed grouse, that were lying in picturesque groups on the heather. He awoke with an air of bewildered surprise, but assented eagerly to our proposal that—in view of the excessive and insufferable heat—we should give up

shooting for the day, and return to the Kittiwake for luncheon. Very proudly did he march down the glen; and as we sat in the stern of the Kittiwake that afternoon, and talked of his day's performances, Mr. Brown, M.P., took a cigar from his mouth, and airily offered to shoot grouse, for a bet, against any man in or out of the Hebrides.

CHAPTER XII.

AMONG THE MOUNTAIN HARES.

"THIS," said Mr. Brown, M.P., "is enjoyment."

We had gone ashore after dinner, and wandered along the rough coast-road in the falling twilight. Mr. Brown was now seated on a huge boulder of rock, out at a promontory that jutted into the sea, and, as he calmly smoked his cigar, he listened to the sound of the waves around him, as they plashed on the stony beach. In the cold green light that filled the sky the stars were not yet visible; but the darkness was sufficient to show us certain glittering orange points along the opposite shores of Islay, where the lights of Port-Ascaig burned yellow in the dusk. The air was filled with the odour of the seaweed. As the darkness deepened we heard the calling of the sea-birds far out at sea; and the islands of Colonsay and Oronsay, that had lain like masses of cloud along the horizon, now wholly disappeared. There was no sign of life around us but the green and red lights of the Kittiwake, that sent two quivering lines of colour down on the moving plain.

"Here," said Mr. Brown, in an absent way, "we can think of something better than killing harmless deer and slaughtering frightened birds. We forget the stupid and boorish exhilaration of the chase, and seek the calm and pensive contemplation of the sea. Do you think that any man could live by the sea, and fail to be a poet? Look at it now—listen to the distant calling of the waves, as if they were holding some wild Walpurgis night out there in the darkness. If I had lived on the shores of Crinan, like Campbell, I, too, might have written something like that splendid sea-song which is the only national hymn worthy of the name that we have got; and who could dwell among these lonely islands without imagining such visionary stories and legends as that of the Maid of Colonsay? What is the beginning of it?—

> On Jura's heath how sweetly swell
> The murmurs of the mountain bee!
> How softly mourns the writhèd shell
> Of Jura's shore, its parent sea!
>
> But softer floating o'er the deep,
> The mermaid's sweet sea-soothing lay,
> That charmed the dancing waves to sleep
> Before the barque of Colonsay!

Don't you think there is the sound of the sea in it—the melancholy and monotonous falling of waves

on the shore? But we who have our duties elsewhere—we who are driven to dwell on Factory Bills, and Militia Bills, and Gas and Water Bills, and Bills for the repression of ruffianism at elections—we who are cooped up in the hottest weather in that hushed and gloomy chamber, with the lights in the roof making all our faces of the colour of faded butter—what chance have we of walking by the shore, and having our brain filled with dreams, and constructing some wild adventure with a mermaid, or a banshee, or some such unholy and mystic creature?"

The Member for Slow struck a vesuvian on the rock, and Mr. Brown gave a violent start. Then he said in a peevish tone—

"Of course, you want suitable companions with you, even to enjoy a brief glimpse of the sea. There are some men who care for nothing but eating, drinking, and killing other animals——"

"Meaning me," remarked the Member for Slow.

This excess of humility on the part of Mr. Weyland suddenly disarmed the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh. Mr. Brown protested that he had been misunderstood. He did not seek to condemn the sports of the field, in moderation. As for Weyland himself, he was one of the very pleasantest companions, said Mr. Brown, a man could meet;

and how could we be sufficiently indebted to him for his hospitality?

"All right, old boy," said Weyland, "but you are indebted to Hulishtaveg, not to me; he has given you a couple of days' excellent deer-shooting; and the keeper told me that the district we shot over to-day is the best piece of grouse-shooting Maclean has got."

"Grouse-shooting," observed Mr. Brown, with the tone of a connoisseur, "is neither so noble nor so picturesque a pastime as the shooting of red-deer. When we were to-day pottering about the hill-sides up there, I was longing to catch even a glimpse of the lofty and desolate region in which we shot the deer yesterday. But doubtless it was miles away; or perhaps a single chain of those splendid hills removed it, as it were, into another world."

At this moment we heard a voice calling out of the darkness, and, having answered the summons, there came down towards us the tall figure of Donald.

"I will pring you a message from Mester Maclean, and he wass sayin if you would like to go and shoot sa hares sa morn's mornin'. We hef a good many hares where it will not frighten either

sa deer or sa grouse, and he says you are ferry welcome."

Mr. Brown, M.P., turned round on his pinnacle of rock.

"Donald," he said, "you will inform Mr. Maclean that we do not know how to thank him for his kindness; that we accept his invitation with gratitude; and that we shall meet you at a reasonable and decent hour to-morrow morning—say nine o'clock—at any point to which you may bring the dogs."

"Sa tawgs?" said Donald, in a stupified way, "what wass you wantin' tawgs for?"

"My good man," replied Mr. Brown, with gracious condescension, "Providence not having gifted us English people with the nose of a setter or pointer, how do you expect us to seek out hares on the side of a Highland hill?"

Here, however, Mr. Weyland interfered, and endeavoured to save Mr. Brown's reputation for sanity by treating the whole matter as a joke. Donald was asked to meet us next morning; and then we returned to the yacht.

Next day we were again favoured with clear and beautiful weather, and there was a slight breeze coming in from the sea, which promised to make the climbing of the hills less broiling work

than it had proved the day before. Mr. Brown had sat up till twelve on the previous night to make an abundance of cartridges, so that his pockets, as well as his belt, were liberally provided. He had formed an idea that we should have a good deal of shooting.

"Not that I consider hare-shooting an exciting thing," he remarked, as we left the shore-road and began to climb up a rocky path leading by a small cottage. "Hare-shooting I look upon as the tamest of field sports. You probe up an unfortunate animal from a tuft of grass, it runs straight before you, and never dodges, and who but the merest tyro could miss it?"

"Did you ever shoot blue hares?" said Mr. Weyland.

"No, nor pink rhinoceroses," said Mr. Brown, contemptuously; for he evidently did not believe in the existence of blue hares.

By the time, however, that we reached the foot of the hill where Donald and a boy, both armed with long saugh rods, were waiting for us, Mr. Weyland had delivered such a lecture on the habits and characteristics of the *lepus variabilis* that Mr. Brown was prepared to find it green as well as blue. Indeed, when he fully understood that he was about to engage in the pursuit of a wild moun-

tain creature his face became more grave. Was this the hare, he asked, that turned white in the winter, and lived in the region of ptarmigan, Arctic bears, and perpetual snow?

We began to ascend. Our course, in the first instance, lay up the side of a little ravine, down which a brown stream was prattling lightly; and then we got up on the first shoulder of the hill. Here a brace of black game got up, but Mr. Brown showed admirable steadiness, and allowed them to sail away unharmed to some distant place of safety. Donald and his assistant still walked on.

"Hadn't we better try this piece of swamp?" said my friend, who was apparently rather hot and considerably blown.

"It iss no use," said Donald carelessly. "Sa hares in sa goot tays keep up sa hill."

He had scarcely spoken when Mr. Brown uttered a terrific shout. Some forty yards ahead of us a hare had got up from behind a tuft of rushes; and just as we caught sight of her, Weyland had put up his gun. The next second the hare had rolled twice over on the spongy ground, and lay there.

"It wass a goot shot," said Donald gravely; "it wass as ferry goot a shot as I will have seen for many a tay."

Mr. Brown walked briskly up to the boy, who was now running back with the prize.

"*That* isn't a blue hare, any way," he remarked confidently.

"But it is," said Weyland, "and nothing else."

"Oh, very well," replied my friend; "if you like to call a dark-grey hare a blue hare, you need stop at nothing. Outside the slang of sporting men, blue is blue, and grey is grey; but if in shooting grey is blue, and blue is grey, why don't you talk of green deer and orange snipe? If this is the wonderful prodigy we have come to shoot, I don't anticipate much difficulty. As far as I can make out, it goes on four legs just like an ordinary hare; and indeed is so uncommonly like an ordinary hare that a charge of No. 6 shot won't find out the difference."

Mr. Brown smiled complacently with the air of having said a good thing, and then we set to work to gain the second shoulder of the hill. Here some greater caution was observed; and, indeed, we had just put our heads over the crest of the ascent when Donald signalled to Mr. Brown to come near him. The Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh took his gun down from his shoulder, and, grasping it with both hands, crept forward, Donald pointed to a thick tuft of dried grass that stood by

the edge of one of those long black drains that have now been cut through so many of the mountainous sheep-pastures of Scotland. From our point of view nothing was visible behind the yellow tuft of grass, but, as Donald was evidently anxious to let Mr. Brown get a shot, we waited to see him advance. What was our astonishment to see our friend suddenly put up his gun to his shoulder and fire. Nothing had stirred. We saw Mr. Brown rush forward, and then, with a triumphant gesture, he held up some dark object in the air.

"Look here, Donald," said the Member for Slow, with perceptible irritation in his voice. "Why didn't you stop him? When a man is such a fool as to shoot a hare sitting in her form, why on earth didn't you stop him?"

"Cash pless me!" said Donald, in a wondering way, "I tit not know he wass goin' to fire."

"This is rather too bad, you know, Brown," said Weyland, with ill-concealed disgust, when the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh came back to us.

"What is too bad?" said Mr. Brown indignantly. "Shooting a hare, when you get the opportunity? You think I ought to have let her run and then shot her? Admirable logic! What does the hare care for that few yards' scamper, and an extra minute of life? Giving her a chance for her life! Why, what

a childish superstition that is, as if there were a bargain between you and the hare, or as if the hare appreciated your courtesy. Let me remind you, my dear friend, that all these fantastic notions are of modern and spurious growth. Our ancestors shot how, when, and where they could; and none of them thought of setting birds into the air to have a chance of winging a dozen of 'em. No; they shot them fairly and completely on the ground, and ate them afterwards. You, yourself, when you steal up to a stag, do you force it into the air before you fire at it? Clear your mind of cant, Weyland. For my part I put aside these ridiculous theories and superstitions—the sham metaphysics of the sporting parson!"

Here Mr. Brown took a drink, and we went on.

The noise of the shot had startled a flock of the pretty little Highland sheep that had been quietly feeding at the further end of this plateau, and a stampede had taken place, the nimble little animals trotting lightly along the bare eminences and down rocky gullies with a singular speed. Now they stood at different points and looked back, looking very picturesque with their small black heads, their curled horns, and big, intelligent eyes. We traversed the whole extent of this plateau without finding anything (a small covey of grouse got up out

of shot), and then we betook ourselves to still higher ground.

Here the ascent was very rugged; masses of grey rock, with an occasional white vein of quartz glimmering in it, stood out from the side of the hill, and seemed to bar all progress. But it was here that our day's shooting properly began; and in something less than half an hour we had picked off three hares that were scuttling away among the rocks as we cautiously ascended. None of these had fallen to Mr. Brown's gun; indeed, he was too busy climbing to think of firing; and when we had reached the top of the rocks he proposed we should rest awhile, and have some brief snatch of luncheon, which a gillie carried. The five hares were unslung from the stick and laid on the heather; the sandwiches were brought forth, and Mr. Brown produced his flask.

It was excessively hot. The slight breeze from the sea had died down—there was not enough left to stir the slow column of blue smoke ascending from the bowl of Mr. Brown's meerschaum. The sun seemed to scorch the close grass and heather on the rounded shoulders of the hill, and the rocks seemed as if they would splinter in the fierce heat. In the silence that succeeded luncheon we could hear only the bleating of the sheep far below us,

and the distant trickling of the burn. It is probable, indeed, that sleep would have overtaken the whole party had not Mr. Brown been seen to grasp his gun stealthily. We turned. The next moment we saw him level the weapon at a hare which had just then caught sight of us and was darting up towards the rocks above. Bang! went the first barrel; a cloud of smoke rose from a piece of rock some two yards behind the hare. Bang! went the second barrel, and Mr. Brown, gazing eagerly through the smoke, found that he had actually killed his quarry. "Well shot!" called out Mr. Weyland; and then the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh laid down his gun quietly, and said, with a splendid affectation of indifference, "Boy, go and fetch that hare."

He took up his pipe again and smoked on peacefully.

"It was a remarkably good shot," said Mr. Weyland.

"Oh, passable," replied our friend.

"How did you catch sight of him in time?"

"I don't generally sleep in the middle of the day," said Mr. Brown, adding in a minute or two, "I am not ashamed to confess that I am rather pleased to have shot this hare. We have now two each; and I have learned that the speed of the mountain hare is not quite a synonym for lightning."

"You underrate your skill," said Weyland, good-naturedly. "That hare just now was going an uncommonly good pace."

"Oh, all you have to do is to aim well forward —well forward," remarked Mr. Brown, seriously. "There is nothing I hate so much as to see a hare or a rabbit shot in the hind legs—it is so very unsportsmanlike. With a little practice, you know, I think I could pick up my old knack of quick shooting. Ah! you ought to have been with the shooting-parties in the Black Forest that I used to go down to from Heidelberg in my student-days. There you have to keep your wits about you, when you've got to tell between the bucks and the does as they go past you like lightning. By the way, did you ever hear 'Im Wald und auf der Haide'?"

The Member for Slow said he had not; whereupon our friend promised to sing it for us that night. And he was as good as his word. When, after the day's shooting—we only got two more hares during the whole of the afternoon—we sat down to dinner, Mr. Brown described to Hulishtaveg, in the most vivacious manner, the picturesque shooting-parties of the Prince von Fürstenberg, and then in the course of the evening he not only sung us "Im Wald und auf der Haide," but also, in tremulous and sentimental tones, the old and sad

story of the "Zerbrochene Ringlein." Mr. Brown was now fairly in the land of poetry and romance. He forgot all about the Customs Clerks' grievances. He appealed to Mr. Maclean to say whether that song of the broken ring was not fit to move a whole nation to tears, and Hulishtaveg replied gravely,

"Oh, it iss a ferry goot song—a ferry goot song, whatever. And sa words o't will pe ferry like sa Gallic—oh, ferry like sá Gallic, mirover. And I trink your ferry goot health, Mester Prown, and hope you will often come again to sa Jura Hills."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BROWN, M.P., AT A HIGHLAND WEDDING.

ONCE more the stately Kittiwake spread forth her white wings to the breeze, and, like the sea-bird that she was, made out for the sea. Maclean, of Hulishtaveg, stood on the beach, and waved his bonnet in adieu—the sunlight showing us his white hair and stalwart form defined against the dark shadow of a rock.

"Farewell, brave son of the hills," said Mr. Brown, M.P., holding on by the ratlines and talking in a mock-heroic tone, which had nevertheless something of tenderness and truth in it; "farewell, thou venerable and kindly patriarch, whose frame has the strength and the dignity of thy native mountains; whose hair is as white as the mist that hangs around them; whose nature is as warm and as genial as the sunshine that now falls over this blue sea. Think of him, Weyland, living in this lonely island, without a relative left him in the world, passing the long and dreary winters in-doors by himself, having never mixed in the crowded

cities of the south, and yet bearing himself towards his servants, towards his associates, and towards strangers with the courtesy, and grace, and dignity of a perfect gentleman. And I wish there were more such gentlemen as he among our aristocracy, and that our House of Lords could show on its benches a dozen men as good as old Hulishtaveg!"

"I wish you'd let the House of Lords alone," said Mr. Weyland, sharply.

"I don't wonder you are anxious to shield them from criticism," said the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, with a splendid air of contempt—"the ridiculous old nincompoops. I suppose they're sitting out on their lawns just now, in easy chairs, wheezing asthmatically in the sunshine, listening to other people shooting in their fields, and feebly endeavouring to sip beef tea."

"I presume you are not troubled with many lords among your relatives, or you'd know more about 'em," remarked the Member for Slow, with anger gathering in his eyes.

Mr. Brown laughed gaily.

"My name," he said, "is a right good old Saxon one. There were Browns in this country before ever a Norman thief set his foot on our shores, and there will be Browns in this country when the effigy of the last of the barons shall have been carted up

to Madame Tussaud's, and the skeleton of the last duke placed in the British Museum among the Megatheria! Allay your wrath, Weyland. Brown is a good name. The first man who wore it earned it because he was, in actual point of fact, brown; but the first man who was called duke was probably an imbecile courtier no more fit to lead an army than to cook a beefsteak."

"It appears to me," remarked Mr. Weyland, slowly, "that you have had your head turned by the sight of the stag's horns that Maclean sent down. I don't mean to answer you according to your folly. The House of Lords is the most firmly fixed institution in the country; and I don't suppose the axis of the earth will be altered by the scraping of a mouse."

"'Gree, bairns, 'gree!" said the Glasgow bailie, "it is jist by ordinar to hear twa raisonable crayturs argy-bargying like that on a braw, fine mornin' when they micht as weel be lookin' aboot and enjoyin' theirsels. Hoose o' Loards! Bless me—what's the Hoose o' Loards to a man that's up in the Soond o' Jura! On a day like this, I wauldna fash my thoomb for twenty Hooses of Loards!"

No living man had ever before heard the bailie make so long a speech. He instantly relapsed into silence, and, having fixed on his spectacles, betook

himself to his newspaper. Weyland busied himself with the tiller, and kept his eye directed towards the small harbour of Port-Ascaig, for which we were bound. The Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh lit a cigar, went up to the bow, and proceeded lazily to scan the prospect before him—the far stretch of white sea away to the south, where Gigha (pronounced Yeea) and Cantire lay blue in the haze. And then the Kittiwake glided into the small bay, the gig was lowered, and in a few minutes we were on the shores of Islay. The bailie had remained behind. He was opposed to violent exercise, and so, instead of joining us in a ride across the island to meet the Kittiwake in Loch-indaal, he preferred to make the full circuit with the yacht.

It was with some difficulty that we procured the three animals we required to take us across, and there was even more trouble about getting the necessary harness. In our quest we were much helped by the ferryman who runs a small boat between Port-Ascaig and Jura. At last the steeds were forthcoming; and very sorry-looking creatures they were—rough raw-boned brutes, that looked melancholy for want of the familiar cart-shafts, and yet allowed us to mount with a docile resignation that was almost pathetic. Indeed, what with Weyland's yachting costume of blue and brass buttons, and Mr.

Brown's suit of light grey tartan, completed with a Glengarry cap and a cigar, it is to be feared that our procession—as we left the small and thoroughly astonished village—was more remarkable for variety and picturesqueness than for any deference to the customs of civilized life; and Mr. Brown, as he gently entreated his charger to ascend the hill lying behind Port-Ascaig, could not forbear speculating on the reception which would have been accorded to us in Hyde-park on some pleasant morning in July. But the quiet and simple Highland folk about saw nothing peculiar in our appearance; and the ferryman aforesaid, on our leaving, hinted that we were probably going over to the marriage at Bridge-end.

"What marriage?" said Mr. Brown.

"Oh, it will pe shist sa marriage o' John MacDougal, sa tailor frae Greenock, wi sa tochter o' Sligan-dubh. Sey are koin to pe married at sa inn."

"Why, the very inn we proposed to stay at," remarked Mr. Brown, in alarm; "and I suppose it will be filled with the whole clan MacDougal, including a dozen pipers."

We did not desist from our project, however; and in course of time we found ourselves up amid the lonely flats of Islay, with the air around us filled

with the resinous odour of the sweet-gale, the most fragrant of all the marsh-plants. The three horses we had borrowed were not subjected to a severe pace; on the contrary, they were allowed to walk so leisurely for the most part of the journey that we found it more convenient and more pleasant to descend and lead them. By this time the two members of Parliament had made up the brief quarrel of the morning; and Mr. Brown was engaged in detailing to his friend such of the grievances of the Customs clerks as he had already been made familiar with. His study of the documents had been postponed by unavoidable causes; but he had nevertheless a vague notion of the subject, and perhaps satisfied his conscience by talking of what he knew. There was not much else to attract attention. The interior of Islay is far from being as picturesque as Jura. It consists chiefly of undulating moorland, here and there broken up by the bed of a stream, and showing an occasional cottage or farm-house, the fields surrounding which stretch out into the black and unclaimed morass. The road was most desolate. Scarcely a human being was to be seen for miles. But at last we beheld a wondrous sight in this solitude—a long string of people, in gay dresses, coming up the road in pairs, and preceded by two pipers. And while they were yet

distant we heard the strange, wild music of the pipes, that had something in its peculiar wail and skirl that seemed appropriate to this savage wilderness. As we drew nearer the music resolved itself into an air, and we knew that this was the wedding-party, for the pipes were playing no pibroch of Locheil, but the familiar Lowland tune of "Wooed and married and a'." After the pipers came the bridegroom and bride, the former a tall young fellow, whose pale face and slight figure contrasted strongly with the browned, bearded, and thickset men who followed in the procession. The bride was a fresh and healthy-looking lass, with rosy cheeks, dark hair, and dark blue eyes, who blushed prodigiously at the jokes which were being shouted by the company. Immediately behind the wedded pair came the best-man, arm-in-arm with the chief bridesmaid, and then followed the string of friends and relatives, the old people winding up the procession.

As we got near them they turned into a house that stood a short distance from the way-side; but the best-man remained for a second or two until we came up, and insisted on our drinking the good health of the young couple. In answer to Mr. Brown's inquiries he explained that this was his house; that they were going to remain there for an

hour or two before going on to the bridegroom's father's farm; that the marriage had taken place down at Bridge-end Inn, and that the tall tailor was a great favourite, for he had come a fortnight in advance of the marriage, and gone round to the houses of his friends, and presented them each with a day's sewing. The best-man pointed to his own coat and waistcoat—garments composed of thick and rough homespun cloth—as an evidence of MacDougal's skill; and added that, in return, he thought the least he could do was to send on three gallons of the best Lagavulin whisky to MacDougal's father's farm.

"There will pe sa great doins there this nicht," he said. "There will pe forty or fifty folk there, and there is two fiddlers comin' over frae Bowmore, besides sa twa pipers. It will pe a ferry goot weddin' whatever; and sa minister—he took a glass o' whusky wi us, and said that Bella was as braw a lass as he had married for years and years tagether. Wass you koin to Bridge-end or Bowmore?"

"We are going to Bridge-end," replied Mr. Brown, in a bland manner, "but we are not in any hurry; and if you would be kind enough to let us join your party for a short time, I should be delighted to send down to Bridge-end for another gallon of Lagavulin."

The small blue eyes in the sunburned face were opened to their fullest extent.

"What wass you sayin'? More whusky? Cash pless me, our whusky is ferry goot—oh, ferry goot whusky! What wass you wantin' to send to Bridge-end for?—but come in to sa hoose—come in to sa hoose—and you will find it ferry goot whusky whatever."

We abandoned our steeds to the care of an urchin; but, instead of going into the house, went up into the yard, whither nearly all the party had preceded us. Here two "four-some reels" were being danced with immense vigour, the piper standing firm and erect, blowing lustily, and tapping on the ground with his foot in time with the wild music. And when this performer—an old man, with long grey hair, who was the only person present wearing the kilt—was marched up to the chair on which a cask of Lagavulin was placed, his post was occupied by one of the guests, who had found an old violin somewhere. Why was it that all the young folk sprang up when he began to play? Mr. Brown, M.P., snapping his fingers in time to the music, and laughing prodigiously, and crying, "Hey!" occasionally, as some strapping young fellow gave a grand pirouette in the air, was suddenly startled by the departure of the violin into a series

of discordant shrieks. Lo! the reel stopped. Each of the bearded dancers caught his partner, and, after a little rough by-play, succeeded in imprinting a kiss on her rosy and blushing cheek. And then the violin returned to its more decorous duties; the reel was recommenced; and the couples danced on until they were tired, and until the men were ready for another dram.

Mr. Brown, M.P., was subsequently introduced to the bride; but, as her stock of English was very limited, her share in the conversation chiefly consisted of blushing. The old people were very pleased to have strangers grace the ceremony; but here again there were obstacles, for all the English the bride's mother knew was, "Coot tay, sir, coot tay!" It was, however, pointed out to the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh that he was delaying the procession, which had yet about a dozen miles of rough moorland and bog to get over; and so, as we got on our horses again, out came the two pipers and the fiddler—all playing at once—the company once more divided itself into pairs, and away they went along the road, with many a laugh and a joke. The best-man, who was certainly excited, shook hands with us in a most affectionate manner on parting; and indeed it seemed probable that he would shed tears.

When we got down to Bridge-end Inn we found that the excitement caused by the marriage had not subsided there. Some friends from the northern side of the island, who could not go all the way, had remained in the inn, and they, too, had a piper. The marriage had been solemnised in the public-room of the place—chairs and tables having been cleared out; and in this empty room the remaining visitors were now holding high jinks—dancing, drinking, and joking, while in the corner an old man was singing, to a select audience, in a shrill, quavering key, some song which was probably of his own composition. Our host informed us that they would soon start on their homeward journey, piper and all; and so, having arranged about getting the three chargers returned to Port-Ascaig, we set off for an afternoon stroll.

Issuing from the trees round Bridge-end we came in sight of the broad waters of Loch-indaal (pronounced Loch-indawl, the accent on the last syllable), with the small town of Bowmore sending up a faint cloud of blue smoke into the evening sky. There was a stiff breeze blowing up from the west, and a small sailing-boat—probably a ferry between Bowmore and the other side of the loch—was dipping well to the waves and scattering the white foam from her bows. Of course, there were

as yet no tidings of the Kittiwake; and we could only imagine her making head against the wind away on the northern side of the island, with our friend the Glasgow bailie looking out on the open waters of the Atlantic or gazing down into the south to find on the misty horizon the pale blue line of the Irish coast.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

WHILE the Kittiwake lay in Loch Indaal a batch of letters arrived; and among them was one which seemed to cause Mr. Brown, M. P., some concern. By the aid of a telescope, he had been endeavouring to make out the Irish coast; but now he came aft, laid down the glass, and informed us gravely that Mr. —— had sent him an invitation to go shooting in Berkshire. Now this Mr. —— is a Cabinet Minister, and there were many reasons, said Mr. Brown, why the invitation should be at once accepted.

"I should have thought Cabinet Ministers had had enough of Berkshire," said the Member for Slow, with a sneer. "Why doesn't he ask you to go shooting in Hampshire? But, if you must go, don't be in a hurry. I will take you back to Greenock, and there you can get the London train. Besides, you know, you have to call in at Arran for your kilt."

"True," said Mr. Brown, thoughtfully. "And

there is another reason why a day or two's delay might be advisable. Somehow or other I have never been able to study those papers I brought away with me, you know, referring to the grievances of the Customs clerks. Here is a capital opportunity. A day or two devoted to them will be time well spent; for then I shall go up to Berkshire with the subject fresh in my mind, and be able to lay it before ——. Indeed, I am very glad that I have so far postponed the consideration of those documents; but now there must be no further delay."

All this was satisfactory. The Kittiwake spread out her white sails, Weyland took up his post at the tiller, and very soon she was cutting through the blue plain of Loch Indaal, with a dash of curling foam at her bows, a gurgling of waters along her bulwarks, and a line of hissing white in her wake. As we got out into the open sea, we caught sight of the Rathlin Isles lying like a faint thread of purple on the southern horizon. Rounding the Mull of Islay, we got into rather a heavy sea; and not unfrequently one of the long-rolling Atlantic waves would rush up to the Kittiwake, take her at a disadvantage, and send a deluge of water over her decks. There was a brisk breeze, too, and when some less formidable wave hit the side of the

yacht and rose towering into the air, the wind tossed the spray all over us, until our waterproofs gleamed wet in the sunshine.

"Is she not rather a small boat to be out in the open sea?" said Mr. Brown, timidly, looking away down towards the North Channel and the stormy Mull of Cantire.

"Why this is nothing," said the Member for Slow, shaking the salt water from his beard, "this is nothing to what you'll get going round the Mull. If you like we can run in for Port Ellen and take her up through the Crinan to-morrow; but with this wind we'll get clean away round to Arran this afternoon, and there is no more danger than if you were sitting in a hansom in Palace-yard."

"Oh, I'm not afraid," said the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, standing erect, but grasping the twisted steel shrouds with a firm hand. "Don't imagine I am afraid. Personally, I like this—I enjoy it—it stirs your blood and sets your spirits on fire—but—but it was the safety of the boat I was thinking of."

"Oh, the yacht will take care of herself," said Mr. Weyland, good-naturedly. "In this sort of weather a sea-swallow is as safe as an albatross."

Certainly, the Kittiwake behaved very well, and as we got further to the south, a greater strain was

put on her seafaring qualities. We were now fully exposed to the long Atlantic swell, and each time the clean little vessel went shivering down into the trough of a wave, the next great green mountain seemed looming over her, as if about to break and engulf her. How lightly she rose, with the grace of a sea-bird, to the summit of these mighty waves —how she seemed to shake the white foam back from her bows—and how she still sped southward —apparently the only living thing on this great waste of waters—cannot be described. Weyland spoke of her affectionately, as of a companion who had gone with him on many a quest, and never failed. He laughed, and talked, and joked at the pitch of his voice; while his face, grown red with the beating of the spray and gleaming with the wet, burned in the sunlight. A finer day for such an excursion could scarcely have been wished for. Overhead, the sky was a plain of deep, pure blue; and not a cloud was visible, except some white patches of mist that hung about the mountains of Jura far up in the north. Down in the south the outline of the Irish coast remained still indistinct; but the Mull of Cantire was gradually becoming more clear, and we could see a white spurt of foam occasionally springing up the face of the precipitous rocks. All around us the hurrying plain of waves

showed a thousand colours, as the sunlight, and the green colour of the sea, and the blue reflection of the sky struggled for mastery, and gleamed here and there on the innumerable angles of the water. In the far distance, however, the reflection of the sky prevailed; and around the shores of Cantire the sea was of a dark, intense, and troubled blue.

It was not until we got down to the Mull that Mr. Brown, M.P., succumbed, and went below. There was some excuse for him. Here the regular swell of the Atlantic was broken up by a series of currents —they say that five tides meet just south of that wild promontory—and the result was an irregular, chopping sea, that knocked the Kittiwake about as if she were a cork. We saw no more of the member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh. He missed the sight of that strange wall of fissured rock, up which spouts of foam were leaping to a height of sixty or eighty feet as the heavy waves dashed in on the iron-bound coast. But as we got past the Sanda light-house the sea was less rough; and by the time we had got round Pladda, and into the calmer waters to leeward of the Kildonan Rocks, the Kittiwake had recovered her equanimity, and her decks were becoming dry.

Then Mr. Brown, M.P., appeared. His face was

very white; but he endeavoured to assume a cheerful look.

"Yes," said he, "I have made some progress with those Customs papers now. It is astonishing what you can do in a short space of time, when you put your mind to it."

"I am glad the yacht did not pitch so as to interfere with your study," remarked Mr. Weyland, gravely.

"Well," said Mr. Brown, with a candid air, "it was rather rough, wasn't it? But I'm not such a bad sailor, you know."

Here he began to whistle "A Life on the Ocean Wave;" and by-and-by, while the colour was slowly returning to his face, we ran up by the coast of Arran, getting a glimpse of the smooth waters and string of cottages of Whiting Bay, the round shoulders of the Holy Island, and the not very picturesque houses of Lamlash, until we finally rounded Clachland Point, and stood in towards Brodick Bay, anchoring not far from the jetty used by the ferry-boats.

We landed in the gig, and made our way up to the hotel, where a large parcel was found waiting for Mr. Brown, M.P. He blushed slightly on being informed of the fact; Mr. Weyland laughed. The fact was that some days before Weyland had per-

suaded our friend to order a suit of kilts from a tailor in Glasgow, as a memento of his Highland tour. Mr. Brown was shy at first; but it was pointed out to him that at a fancy ball, or at one of the Scotch celebrations in London, his picturesque costume would stand him in good stead. At length he was won over; and the tailor was directed to send the bundle down to Brodick, where the Kittiwake was to call.

For a long time Mr. Brown was doubtful about that kilt. The fact was we had not seen, in all our wanderings over Highlands and Lowlands, a single Scotchman wear the traditional garb of his country, except here and there a gamekeeper and a few English tourists. But at last, the costume being ready to his hand, and Brodick being a small place in which to try the experiment, he at length retired to a dressing-room, and we lost sight of him.

When Mr. Brown, M.P., came down-stairs again our first impulse was certainly not to laugh at him. There was a mute and sensitive appeal in his eyes. Weyland spoke of the costume approvingly and in a light manner; and then hinted that Mr. Brown might accompany us down to a little wooden erection near the jetty, where we proposed to purchase some photographs. Our friend glanced rather nervously out into the open air, as little boys do when they are

about to be carried down for their first dip in the sea. Then a ghastly and painful smile appeared on his face for a moment, and he said, "All right."

We went out. Mr. Brown's costume, in the tartan of the Gordons, was resplendent, and the silver mountings and flashing jewels with which it was set shone in the evening light. Unhappily, however, the most conspicuous part of him was that which the kilt left uncovered, and there Mr. Brown seemed to rival the snowy whiteness of Andromeda, as she stood chained on the rock over the blue sea. Once or twice we caught him glancing apprehensively down, and a shiver occasionally passed through his frame as the wind blew up from the bay. However, no one spoke of his dress, and he in a somewhat loud tone of voice began to say—

"What do you think, Weyland, I ought to do with that solan goose? I know a family of very nice young ladies at Laurie Park, Sydenham, and I should like to send them something from Scotland. Would the stuffed solan do? I hate sending game, which is in effect a commonplace and ridiculous custom, filling people's larders for nothing, and cheating the poulterer out of his legitimate gains. I think I shall send the deer's horns home to my own house, and the stuffed solan down to Sydenham."

There were a few loiterers about the small quay. Their eyes were apparently attracted towards Mr. Brown. He paid no attention. On the contrary he began to hum a French song—something about "*Mire dans mes yeux tes yeux, ma belle brunette*"—and then we reached the photographer's shop or hut, into which we escaped from the gaze of the vulgar.

There was a very charming young lady of about thirteen selling those sixpenny treasures of art. Mr. Brown had entered the place with something of a swagger, but now he seemed anxious to get either of his companions to stand in front of him. He even seemed to crouch down a little bit whenever the soft eyes of this amiable young person were turned towards him. His face wore an uncomfortable look. He bought things recklessly. He answered at haphazard, and in rather a snappish tone. At last, when we got out, he said, in a voice of suppressed rage:

"Why did the fool make those confounded things so short!"

"They are quite as long as usual," said Weyland, "only you're not accustomed to them."

He had scarcely uttered the words when a sudden commotion occurred. A keeper had come down to the jetty with a brace of setters in leash,

and a big black retriever, with rather wolfish eyes. No sooner did the black dog behold Mr. Brown and the unusual spectacle of his milk-white calves, than he rushed furiously at him. Mr. Brown uttered a sharp, low cry, and stumbled backward into the photographer's shop. The dog followed him, closed up on him, and stood with his fore feet stuck out, barking wildly, and apparently about to spring at the members which had offended him. An exciting scene now followed. The young lady endeavoured to push back the dog with an umbrella. Mr. Brown, with a face grown white, tried to get behind the small counter, and failed. Weyland aimed a kick at the brute, and missed. The keeper tried to collar him, without avail; and it was not until a whole *posse comitatus* of boatmen, servants, and loungers had hunted the dog off and tied him up that our pale and alarmed friend ventured forth. We got him up to the hotel, where he took a little brandy, and then tried to put a brave face on the matter.

"Those horrid curs!" he exclaimed; "I wonder if that brute belongs to the Duke of Hamilton. If so I should be inclined to write to him, and I am sure the Duke would order the keeper to shoot the dog."

"You have had rather an adventure with your kilt," said the Member for Slow in a kind way.

"I shan't take it off for that," said Mr. Brown, courageously.

It was now close upon dinner-time, and we walked into the large room. One or two people were already there, and among them were a lady and her two daughters, whom Weyland knew. He took occasion to introduce his friends; and Mr. Brown found himself constrained to bring forward a chair and sit down in front of the mamma. Presently we observed that there was a crimson hue over his forehead, and he spoke in a nervous fashion. We could see him twitching at his kilt occasionally, and edging his chair round. The colour in his face deepened; his embarrassment grew painfully obvious. At length he rose to his feet, and said, in almost an excited way—

"Will you excuse me, Madam? I think I have forgotten my—my—my handkerchief."

With that he got out of the room; and in about a quarter of an hour, when we were all at dinner, he returned, in the ordinary attire of a sane person. But rage fierce and uncontrollable still dwelt in his eyes.

"Think of the infamous ruffian," he said, in a vicious whisper, "making a costume like that, and we supposed to be living in civilized society! I declare I'll give them to the first crossing-sweeper I

meet at Notting-hill, and make him wear them to bring eternal disgrace on garments that are not fit for a savage. The Caledonian Ball? Bah, I suppose the gentlemen who go to that interesting ceremony complain of the dresses worn by ballet girls. They ought to be ashamed of themselves."

"Which?" said Weyland, "the gentlemen or the ballet girls?"

"You," replied Mr. Brown, "for having inveigled me into making an ass of myself. But you don't catch me doing it again; no, never, if I lived in the desert of Sahara, without a human being to be found within a thousand miles of me. It is not, however, the ridicule of the vulgar that I fear; it is the censure of your own mind when you have been led to sacrifice your self-respect."

Mr. Brown's vehemence, however, died down; and after dinner when we were peacefully smoking a cigar, he even managed to laugh over the adventure with the dog. And then he told us in a confidential mood of the manner in which he meant to appeal to the Cabinet Minister about the grievances of the Customs clerks, and of the great deeds he expected to do among the partridges after his experiences in the North.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST TURN.

MR. BROWN had now to decide whether he would remain in Arran next day, and get up to Greenock on the following morning, or whether he would finish up his Highland wanderings by a run through the Kyles of Bute. He wisely chose the latter alternative. Like children on a garden-swing, he wanted "a good one for the last;" and Weyland had quite stimulated his curiosity by his talk of the fairy loveliness of the Kyles.

"Besides," said Mr. Brown, "during the quiet sail up there, I shall be able to give an hour or two to those papers. I have little time left now, and must economise it."

Accordingly, on a beautiful and bright forenoon, we bade farewell to Brodick Bay, and stood out into the broad estuary of the Clyde, which is here as spacious and as clear as an inland sea. We had a magnificent view of the Arran mountains as we got out some little distance from the shore—their splendid peaks just touched here and there with a

flake of white cloud, while a flood of sunlight poured down into the great valleys of Glen Rosa and Glen Sannox, and lay drowsily on the fir-woods surrounding Brodick Castle. We passed the steamer coming over from Ardrossan; and Mr. Brown, standing at the bow, waved his handkerchief to the passengers —a salute which was returned.

It was indeed a pleasant morning. There was just enough westerly wind to fill our sails and ruffle the blue bosom of the deep; and the Kittiwake, scarcely lying over, cut lightly through the water. The further we got north, the more lovely seemed the prospect that lay all around us. Over there on the right were the smooth hills and long-stretching woods of Ayrshire, with the towns of Troon, Irvine, and Ardrossan glimmering through a faint haze of smoke; further up the two Cumbraes seemed to be almost close inshore; right ahead of us were the lonely shores and green undulations of the island of Bute; and away on our left, the Sound of Bute stretched up towards the Cowal coast and the broad mouth of Loch Fyne.

Nowhere in all our wanderings had we seen such numbers and varieties of sea-birds; and Mr. Brown's attention was wholly given up to watching for long strings of wild-duck, and clouds of tern, and clusters of guillemots floating on the waves. Great was his

anxiety, too, to discover whether each white gull that appeared in the distance was not a solan; and, in point of fact, he was gratified by the sight of at least half-a-dozen of those birds—hovering singly, for the most part, over the smooth waters that lay under the shadow of the shores of Cantire. At last, so many and so various were the strange animals that kept flying about and tantalising him, that he went below and fetched up Weyland's gun.

"I thought you had gone down for the Customs clerks' papers," remarked the Member for Slow, gravely.

"Bother the Customs clerks' papers!" said Mr. Brown; and then he added, in rather a vexed tone, "why can't you allow a man to have a moment's relaxation? No sooner does one begin to feel amused and prone to enjoy the passing moments without thinking, than you must thrust forward your admonitions about work. I don't think it's friendly. I don't see that you do so much work yourself."

Weyland looked surprised.

"Why," said he, "I never mentioned the matter before, and you have done nothing ever since you have been on board but talk of your confounded Customs clerks, and what you meant to do with them. You needn't get into a temper simply because you have been indolent."

"Indolent!" said the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh, laughing bitterly. "Indolent! When I escaped from the fag end of a laborious session to recruit my health, which had been broken by late hours and close attention to parliamentary business, there was not much call for me to attack new work. Yet I did it voluntarily. Of my own free will I undertook this task. Of my own free will I have devoted my leisure to the study of those papers——"

"When?" said Weyland.

"When you were asleep, as you generally are," was the retort.

At this point both Members of Parliament, catching each other's eye, burst out laughing; and the Scotch bailie, who had not spoken a word all the morning, joined in.

"To hear ye talk," said our stout friend, "ane would think ye had nae mair mainners than a wheen school-laddies. But I'm thinking ye have learnt a' that in Paurliament. Short o' downright sweerin', the language sometimes used on both sides o' the House is only fit for carters."

"But the Conservative side at least preserves the show of courtesy," remarked Weyland.

"The Liberal side," retorted Mr. Brown, "having truth for its banner, can afford to speak fearlessly, and express its opinions about its opponents."

With that, the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh departed to the bow of the Kittiwake, with Weyland's breech-loader in his hand, and the grievances of the Customs clerks were once more relegated to the unknown future.

We were now in Inchmarnoch Water, and before us appeared the entrance into the magic wonders of the Kyles. A soft summer haze lay over the wooded hills and rocks, and the breeze was insensibly fading off; so that to leeward of Ardlamont Point the sea was still and smooth. It did not seem probable that we should get sufficient wind to carry us up to Tighnabruich; but we were still creeping along, and in course of time we were fairly up to Ardlamont Point, and into the Kyles.

Even as the discovery of America was announced by the firing of a cannon from the vessel of Fernandez Ponto, so our entrance into the Kyles of Bute was signalised by the report of Mr. Brown's breach-loader. We looked up towards the bow, and beheld our friend gesticulating wildly to the sailors, while some distance ahead a small object was floating on the water. The yacht was run close up to it, and then one of the sailors dexterously fished up the dead bird from the waves. It was a tern; and as Mr. Brown came aft in triumph, to show us the

beautiful grey and speckled plumage and the curved, swallow-like wings, Weyland said—

"What a shame to kill one of those birds! It is mere wanton slaughter."

"I don't see it in that light," remarked Mr. Brown coolly. "I am going down partridge-shooting. I wished to try the distance you must fire in front of a bird going at a great speed, and so I fired at this tern as he was going past like lightning. You see the result. It was a test—the tern being nearly of the same size as the partridge."

"Is it? I suppose you mean to fire at cheepers or anything, and have———, Cabinet Minister as he is, swearing at you like a trooper."

"I am not in the habit of making myself ridiculous when out shooting," said Mr. Brown, with some dignity.

But this incident of the tern seemed to have drawn our friend's attention in a new direction. He kept fidgeting about with the gun. He lamented that there would not now be time for his forming that collection of sea-birds he had once spoken of. He spoke of nothing but powder and lead, and wads and charges, until, finally, he said to Weyland, in an appealing voice—

"I say, Weyland, couldn't we have some shooting somewhere this afternoon?"

"Well, no," said the Member for Slow; "not unless you like to go out in the evening to pot those divers, and that is not a very exciting form of amusement."

"Oh, I think it is," said Mr. Brown, eagerly. "Fancy the romance of it—the calm of the evening—the lovely scenery—the anxiety of the chase: by all means let us go out."

Not a word about the Customs clerks. We slowly sailed up into the Kyles: a slight breeze just sufficed to carry us onward; and as we got up to Kames, all the loveliness of the place spread out before us. For the moment Mr. Brown was drawn from watching the sea-birds to contemplating that beautiful picture—the winding channel of blue water, the craggy hills, the deep umbrageous woods coming down to the very margin of the sea, the occasional white cottage gleaming above the shingly beach, and here and there a yacht coming out with all her sails set from the recesses of some secret bay. So still the place was, too, in the afternoon sunlight! We could hear nothing but the ripple of the water along the side of the Kittiwake, and the calling of the wild birds. When at last we came to an anchorage at Tighnabruich, and landed, and walked up to the inn there, Mr. Brown declared he had seen no lovelier scenery anywhere in the world.

But these pleasant surroundings and the after-luncheon laziness of the afternoon did not wean him from his fell purpose. About six o'clock that night you might have seen us get into a little open sailing-boat, which had a heap of big stones lying along the bottom by way of ballast.

The owner and skipper of the craft was a sort of half boatman, half fisherman—an old weather-beaten man, with a Scotch bonnet and garments patched and mended in many places. He was silent and even morose, and went about his work as though we had "requirirt" his services, instead of having offered him a very handsome reward for the use of his boat.

However, Mr. Brown, M.P., took no heed of these things, nor did he pay any attention to Mr. Weyland's protestations against the unsportsman-like errand on which we were bent. It was his last evening in the Highlands. Perhaps he might never again have a chance of shooting at those wild creatures of the deep which had woven a spell of fascination over him. He even forgot the brief and emphatic speech he had made in the House on the destruction of the wild-birds along our coast, when the Bill to prevent that was brought in.

How lovely the Kyles looked now, with the red colours of the sunset shining over the sea and the

hills, and catching the sides of the mountains up by Loch Striven! Far down in the south, too, the great plain lay still and silent, with here and there the sail of a fishing-smack glowing like a speck of crimson flame over the darkening surface of the waters. We lay in the stern of the small boat, and smoked our pipes, as she slowly got out to sea before a light breeze coming off the hills. Mr. Brown was up at the bow, his back against the mast, and his position partially concealed by the jib in front of him. He alone had brought a gun with him. Once or twice we saw him put it up to his shoulder; and then again he would drop it with some low-muttered exclamation.

There were birds about somewhere. We could hear them calling. Now and again a whirr of wings was audible in the distance; but none of the "dookers" came our way. At last, however, we saw the boatman touch Mr. Brown's arm, and point out to something floating on the waves, or rather ripples, of the sea. There were two black specks visible on that purple plain, and we could see the boat's prow slowly wearing round towards them. The more near we got, the more clearly we saw the two birds—obviously "dookers," with their shining black and white plumage and curved beak. They were paddling about, in open disregard of us,

and sometimes stretching themselves up to flutter their wings. When the boat was certainly not more than fifteen yards from them, off went both of Mr. Brown's barrels with a noise which was echoed all along the solitary shores of the Kyles.

"What a beastly shame!" said Weyland.

"Run the boat to," shouted Mr. Brown to the man; "run her up; turn her head! I know I killed them—I am sure I killed them—I'll swear they're killed!"

The old brown-faced man did not take the least notice of Mr. Brown's excitement.

"They were doon before the shot reached them," he said, moodily.

Whether the birds had "ducked the shot," or whether Mr. Brown had blown them into nothingness, we saw no further traces of them; and so once more our friend resumed his post, and we drifted further down. A very few minutes sufficed to discover to the anxious eyes at the bow another dark object on the water; and this time, just as the bird was fluttering its wings, we again heard a loud bang! and the unfortunate animal turned over on the water, and lay there. Weyland ran the boat close to the prize, and Mr. Brown, leaning over the side, made a dash at the bird, and secured it. It is true, that at the same moment he had plunged

his arm up to the elbow in the sea; but that did not damp the triumph with which he brought forward his quarry for our inspection. The bright eyes of the diver were still unglazed, and its smooth and clean plumage was dripping with the sea-water.

"What is the use of killing those unfortunate animals?" said Mr. Weyland once more.

"Practice," observed the Member for Bourton-in-the-Marsh. "It is a deal more difficult to hit those birds than you imagine, when you have to steady yourself against the heaving of the boat, and at the same time watch the moment they are likely to come to the top of a wave."

"And is that good practice for shooting in Berkshire?" inquired the Member for Slow.

"If you don't like it, we can land you," returned Mr. Brown.

"On the contrary," said Weyland, "I enjoy myself where I am, amazingly, especially when I have the pleasure of your society and amiable conversation. I was only thinking how those birds liked it."

"There are plenty of 'em," said Mr. Brown, with a callous indifference which showed the brutalising effect of a breech-loader.

And there were plenty of them. A few minutes thereafter, we steered right into a cluster of "dookers," and here Mr. Brown fired right and left, slipping in cartridges and letting them off so long as there was a bird visible. Out of the lot he got two—at least, we could only find two, for in the curious metallic glare now falling over the sea it was difficult to distinguish objects.

"Are you satisfied with your aimless slaughter now?" asked Weyland.

"I don't consider it aimless slaughter," retorted Mr. Brown, "when I mean to eat the birds."

"Eat them!"

"Yes, why not?"

"You'll have a taste of herring in your mouth for a month."

"The flavour of herring is not disagreeable in herring; why should it be in a bird? All you have to do is to imagine you are eating herring."

"Your philosophy won't prevent your becoming sick."

"We shall see," replied Mr. Brown.

It was now resolved that we should make for Tighnabruich once more, lest the wind should fail us; and the chances were, besides, that Mr. Brown would have some more shooting on the way. But even he was weaned away from his watch by the

extraordinary appearances now around us. The sun had gone down; but there was still a glow of red and yellow in the west. The hills above Tighnabruich were a dark, intense purple, that heightened the wild clear glare of the sky above. But the most peculiar sight of all was the singular radiance that was over the water—a glow of strange greenish yellow that broke into a thousand shapes as the waves rolled on. In the dusk the metallic glare of the sea was almost painful to the eyes; and we were glad to turn from it to the pure colours above, where a pale blue was shaded with pink, where the eastern sky caught the reflection of the sunset. The hills about the Kyles grew more and more dark. The sickle of the moon rose in the south, but her radiance was as yet not strong enough to touch the waves. When we finally got back to Tighnabruich, there were stars faintly visible in the sky, and a cold night-wind coming down from the solitudes of the hills.

"To-morrow," said Mr. Brown, "I go south. If I have, in the excitement of the chase, offended you at any moment, Weyland, I am sorry for it. I leave Scotland, and all those magnificent scenes we have visited, with a deep and profound regret; and I shall often think of the splendid days we had together in the Kittiwake. But, you see, busi-

ness calls me away—the hard and stern duties of the world. Do you think now I shall be able to study those Customs documents in the train, as I go up to London, to-morrow?"

"I don't know," said Weyland. "If I were you, I should leave them over until I got to Berkshire."

"I think I must," said Mr. Brown thoughtfully. "There is nothing that more clearly distinguishes the prudent man than the faculty of being able to sketch out and apportion his time, so as to keep work and play in their proper and relative positions."

THE FOUR MACNICOLS.

[NOTE.—The following sketch of the founding of a Co-operative Association by four Scotch boys, was originally meant for young people; but subsequently the writer ventured to think that it might prove equally interesting, or even more interesting, to grown-up folk, especially as parts of it are based on fact; and so it is now printed here for the first time.]

CHAPTER I.

JUVENTUS MUNDI.

It was on a bright and glorious morning in July that the great chieftain, Robert of the Red Hand, accompanied by his kinsmen and allies, put to sea in his war-galley, resolved to sweep the Spanish main free of all his enemies, and thereafter to hold high revel in the halls of Eilean-na-Rona. At least, that was how it appeared to the imagination of the great chieftain himself, though the simple facts of the case were a trifle less romantic. For this Robert of the Red Hand, more familiarly known as Rob MacNicol, or even as plain Rob, was an active, stout-sinewed, black-eyed lad of seventeen, whose only mark of chieftainship apparently was that, unlike his brothers, he wore shoes and stockings; these three relatives constituted his allies and kinsmen; the so-called Spanish main was in reality an arm of the sea better known in the Hebrides as Loch Scrone; and the war-galley was an old, ramshackle, battered,

and be-tarred boat belonging generally to the fishing-village of Erisaig; for, indeed, the boat was so old and so battered that nobody now seemed to claim any special ownership of it.

These four MacNicols, — Robert, Neil, Nicol, and Duncan,—were, it must be admitted, an idle and graceless set, living for the most part a hand-to-mouth, amphibious, curlew-like kind of life, and far more given to aimless voyages in boats not belonging to them than inclined to turn their hand to any honest labour. But this must be said in their excuse that no boy or lad born in the village of Erisaig could by any means whatsoever be brought to think of becoming anything else than a fisherman. It was impossible to induce them to apprentice themselves to any ordinary trade. They would wait until they were old enough to go after the herring, like the others; that was man's work; that was something like; that was different from staying ashore and twiddling one's fingers over a pair of somebody else's shoes, or laboriously shaping a block of sandstone for somebody else's house. This Rob MacNicol, for example: it was only for want of a greater career that he had constituted himself a dreaded sea-rover, a stern chieftain, etc. etc. His secret ambition—his great and constant and secret ambition — went far farther

than that. It was to be of man's estate, broad-shouldered and heavy-bearded; to wear huge black boots up to his thighs, and a blue flannel jersey; to have a peaked cap (not forgetting a brass button on each side by way of smartness); and then to come along, in the afternoon, with a yellow oil-skin tied up in a bundle, to the wharf where the herring fleet lay, the admiration and the envy of all the miserable creatures condemned to stay ashore.

In the meantime—in these days of joyous idleness, while as yet the cares and troubles which this history will have to chronicle were far away from him and his simply because they were unknown—Rob MacNicol, if he could not be a fisherman, could be an imaginary chieftain, and in that capacity he gave his orders as one who knew how to make himself obeyed. As soon as they had shoved the boat clear of the smacks, the jib was promptly set; the big lumps of stone that served for ballast were duly shifted; the lug-sail, as black as pitch and full of holes, was hoisted, and the halyards made fast; then the sheet was hauled in by Nicol MacNicol, who had been ordered to the helm; and finally the shaky old nondescript craft began to creep through the blue waters of Erisaig Bay. It was a lovely morning; the light breeze from the land seemed steady enough; altogether,

nothing could have been more auspicious for the setting out of the great chieftain and his kinsmen.

But great as he is, he is not above fearing the criticism of people ashore on his method of handling a boat. Rob, from his proud position at the bow, darted an angry glance at his helmsman.

"Keep her full, will ye?" he growled in an undertone. "Do ye call that steering, ye gomeril? Run her by Daft Sandy's boat! It is no better than a cowherd you are at the steering."

This Daft Sandy, who will turn up in our history by-and-by, was a half-witted old man, who spent his life in fishing for flounders from a rotten old punt he had become possessed of. He earned a sort of living that way; and seldom went near the shore during the day except to beg for a herring or two for bait, when the boats came in. He got the bait, but in an ignominious way; for the boys, stripping the nets, generally saved up the "broken" herring in order to pelt Daft Sandy with the fragments when he came near. That is to say, they indulged in this amiable sport except when Rob MacNicol happened to be about. That youth had been heard to remark that the first he caught at this game would pay a sudden visit to the dead dog-fish lying beneath the clear waters of

the harbour; and it was very well known among the urchins of Erisaig that the eldest MacNicol had very little scruple about taking the law into his own hand. When he found a bigger boy thrashing a smaller one, he invariably thrashed the bigger one, just to keep things even, as it were; and he had invented for the better guidance of his brethren and associates a series of somewhat stringent rules and punishments, to which, it must be acknowledged, he cheerfully submitted himself. At the same time, he was aware that even the most moral and high-principled government has occasionally to assert itself with rude physical force; and although his hand was not particularly red, as might have been expected, it was uncommonly hard, and a cuff from it was understood to produce the most startling lightning effects in the region of the eye.

Well, as they were nearing Daft Sandy's punt, Rob called out to him,

"Sandy, have ye had any luck the day?"

The little, bent, blear-eyed old man looked up from his hand-lines.

"No mich."

As the boat was gliding past Rob flung a couple of herring into the punt.

"There's some bait for ye."

"Ay; and where are ye for going, Robert?" the old man said, as they passed. "Tak' heed. It's squally outside."

There was no answer; for at this moment the quick eye of the chieftain detected one of his kinsmen in the commission of a heinous crime. Tempted by the light and steady breeze, Nicol had given way to idleness, and had made fast the main-sheet, instead of holding it in his hand, ready for all emergencies. This, and not unnaturally, on such a squally coast, Rob MacNicol had constituted an altogether unforgivable offence; and his first impulse was to jump down to the stern of the boat and give the helmsman, caught *in flagrante delicto*, a sounding whack on the side of the head. But a graver sense of justice prevailed. He summoned a court-martial. Nicol, catching the eye of his brother, hastily tried to undo the sheet from the pin; but it was too late. The crime had been committed; there were two witnesses, besides the judge, who was also the jury. The judge and jury forthwith pronounced sentence: Nicol MacNicol to forfeit one penny to the fund being secretly stored up for the purchase of a set of bag-pipes, or to be lowered by the shoulders until his feet should touch the ground in the dungeon of Eilean-na-Rona Castle. He was left to decide which alternative he would accept;

and it must be said that the culprit, after a minute or two's sulking, perceived the justice of the sentence, and calmly said he would take the dungeon.

"Ye think I'm feared?" he said contemptuously, to Neil and Duncan, who were grinning at him. "Wha was it that gruppit the whutteruck*? And is there anything worse than whutterucks in that hole in the castle?"

"Ye'll find out, Nicol, my man," said his cousin Neil. "There's warlocks. And they'll grup ye by the legs."

"I'll save the penny anyway," said Nicol, to whom a penny was a thing of known and substantial value.

Now if any proof had been needed that Rob MacNicol's stringent sailing rules were a matter of stern necessity, it was quickly forthcoming. On this beautiful summer morning, with the sea smooth and blue around them, they were sailing along as pleasantly as might be. But they had scarcely got through the narrow channel leading from the harbour, and were just emerging into Loch Scrone, when a squall of wind came tearing along and hit the boat so that the lug-sail was almost flattened on to the water.

* *Anglicè*, seized hold of the weasel.

"Run her up! Haul in your sheet!" yelled Rob to the frightened steersman.

Well it was at such a moment that the main-sheet was free to be hauled in; for as the bow was put up to the wind, the varying squall caught her on the other beam and threw her over, so that she shipped a bucket or two of water. Had the water got into the belly of the sail, the weight would have dragged her down; but Rob instantly got rid of this danger by springing to the halyards, and, the moment the crank craft strove to right herself, bringing sail and yard rattling down into the boat. By this time, so fierce was the squall, a pretty heavy sea had sprung up, and altogether things looked very ugly. When they allowed the jib to fill, even that was enough to send the boat over, and she had already a dangerous lot of water surging among the ballast; while, when they were forced to put her head to the wind, she drifted with a heavily running tide, and right to leeward was a long reef of rocks that would inevitably crunch her into matchwood. The younger brothers said not a word, but looked at Rob, ready to obey his slightest gesture, and Rob stood by the mast calling out from time to time to Nicol.

Matters grew worse. It was no use trying merely to keep her head to the wind, for she was drifting

rapidly, and the first shock on the rocks would send her and her stone ballast to the bottom. On the other hand, there was no open sea-room to let her run away before the wind with a straining jib. At all hazards it was necessary to fight her clear of that long ledge of rock, even if the wind threatened to tear the mast out of the boat. So Rob himself sprang down to the stern and took the tiller.

"Duncan, Neil, stand by the halyards now! When I sing out to ye, hoist her—be ready now!"

He had his eye on the rocks all this time. On the highest of them was a tall iron perch, painted scarlet—a warning to sailors; but from that point long shelves and spurs ran out, the yellow surface of barnacles growing greener and greener as they went deeper into the sea. Already Rob MacNicol could make out some of these submarine reefs, even through the turbulent water.

"Now then, boys; up with her! Quick now!"

It was a venturesome business; but there was no help for it. The moment the sail was half hoisted, a gust caught the boat and drove her over until her gunwale again scooped up a lot of the hissing water. But as she righted, staggering all the while, it was clear there was some good way

on her, and Rob, having had recourse to desperate remedies, was determined to give her enough of the wind. Down again went the gunwale to the hissing water; and the strain on the rotten sheets of the old boat was so great that it was a wonder everything did not go by the board. But now there was a joyous hissing of foam at the bow; she was forging ahead; if she could only stand the pressure, in a minute or so she would be clear of the rocks. Rob still kept his eye on these treacherous shelves of yellow-green. Then he sang out,

"Down with her, boys!"

The black lug-sail rattled into the boat; there was nothing left now but the straining jib.

"Slack the lee jib-sheet!"

The next minute he had put his helm gently up; the bow of the boat fell away from the wind; and presently—just as they had time to see the green depths of the rocks they had succeeded in weathering—the war-galley of the great chieftain was spinning away down Loch Scrone, racing with the racing waves, the wind tearing and hauling at her bellied-out jib.

"Hurrah, my lads! we'll soon be at Eilean-na-Rona now, eh?" Rob shouted.

He did not seem much put about by that narrow escape. Squalls were common on this coast,

and it was the business of one aspiring to be a fisherman to take things as they came.

"Come, set to work and bale out the boat, you bare-shanks lot! How d'ye think she can sail with the half of Loch Scrone inside her?"

Thus admonished, the younger brothers were soon among the stone ballast baling out the surging water with such rude utensils as they could find. But the squall was of no great duration. The wind moderated in force; then it woke up again, and brought a smart shower of rain across; then, as if by magic, the heavens suddenly cleared, a burst of hot sunlight fell around them, the sea grew intensely blue, the far hills on the other side of Loch Scrone began to shine green in the yellow light, and all that was left to tell of the squall that had very nearly put an end to the great chieftain and all his clan was a quickly running sea, now all sparkling in diamonds.

The danger being thus over, Rob once more delivered the tiller into the charge of his brother Nicol, and went forward to his post of observation at the bow. About the only bit of the imaginative voyage on which he had started that had a solid basis in fact was the existence of an old castle—or rather the ruins of what had once been a castle—on the island called Eilean-na-Rona; and now that

they were racing down Loch Scrone, that small island was drawing nearer, and already they could make out the dark tower and ivied walls of the ancient keep. Far darker than the tower itself were the legends connected with this stronghold of former times; but for these the brothers MacNicol, who had seized on the place as their own, cared little. It is true, they had some dread of the dungeon, and none of them would have liked to visit Eilean-na-Rona at night; but in the daytime the old ruins formed an excellent retreat, where they could play such high jinks or hold such courtly tournaments as they chose.

They ran the boat into a little creek of the uninhabited island, driving her right up on the beach for safety's sake, there being no anchor. Then—Neil carrying a small basket the while and Duncan a coil of rope—they passed through a wood of young larches and spruce, the air smelling strongly of bracken and meadow-sweet after the rain; and finally they reached the rocky eminence on which stood the ruins. There was no way up, for tourists did not come that way, and the owner of the island, who was a farmer on the mainland, had but little care for antiquities. However, the lads found no difficulty. They swarmed up the face of the crags like so many squirrels, and found themselves on a

grassy plateau which had once formed the outer courtyard of the keep. Around this plateau were fragments of what in former days had been a massive wall, but most of the crumbling masonry was hidden under ivy and weeds. In front of them, again, rose the great tower with its arched and gloomy entrance, and its one or two small windows, in the clefts of which bunches of wallflower were growing. The only sign of life about the old castle or the uninhabited island was given by two or three jackdaws that wheeled about overhead, and cawed harshly in resentment of this intrusion.

The great chieftain, Robert of the Red Hand, having now assembled his kinsmen and allies in the ancient halls of Eilean-na-Rona, proceeded to speak as follows,

"Nicol, my man, ye have been tried and convicted."

"I ken that," was Nicol's philosophical reply.

"Ye had no business to make fast the sheet of the lug-sail; ye might have drooned the lot of us."

Nicol nodded. He had sinned, and was prepared to suffer.

"Have ye ought to say against your being lowered into the dungeon?"

"I have not. Do you think I'm feared?" said Nicol scornfully.

"Ye will not pay the penny?"

"Deil a penny will I pay!"

"Nicol," said his cousin Neil, with some touch of compassion—for indeed he knew that the dungeon was a gruesome place—"Nicol, maybe you have not got a penny?"

"Well, I have not," said Nicol.

"Will I lend ye one?"

"What would be the use of that?" said Nicol; "I would have to pay it back. Do you think I'm feared? I tell you I am not feared."

So there was nothing for it but to get the rope and pass it under Nicol's arms, fastening it securely at his back. Thus bound, the culprit was marched through the archway of the old tower into an apartment that was but feebly lit by the reflected glare coming from without. The other boys, as well as Nicol, walked very carefully over the dank-smelling earth, until they came to what seemed to be a large hole dug out of the ground, and black as midnight. This was the dungeon into which Nicol was to be lowered, that he might expiate his offence before the high revels began.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAST OF THE GAMES.

But before proceeding to relate how the captive clansman was lowered into the dungeon of the castle on Eilean-na-Rona, it will be necessary to explain why he did not choose to purchase his liberty by the payment of the sum of one penny. Pennies among the boys of Erisaig, and more especially among the MacNicols, were an exceedingly scarce commodity. The father of the three MacNicols, who was also burdened with the charge of their orphan cousin Neil, was a hand on board the steamer *Glenara Castle*, and very seldom came ashore. He had but small wages; and it was all he could do, in the bringing up of the boys, to pay a certain sum for their lodging and schooling, leaving them pretty much to cadge for themselves as regarded food and clothes. Their food, mostly porridge, potatoes and fish of their own catching, cost little; and they did not spend much money on clothes, especially in summer time, when no Erisaig boy—except Rob MacNicol, who was a distinguished

person—would submit to the encumbrance of shoes and stockings. Nevertheless, for various purposes, money was necessary to them; and this they obtained by going down in the morning, when the herring boats came in, and helping the men to strip the nets. The men were generally tired out and sleepy with their long night's work; and if they had had anything like a good haul, they were glad to give these lads twopence or threepence apiece to undertake the labour of lifting the nets, yard by yard, out of the hold, shaking out the silvery fish and dexterously extricating those that had got more firmly enmeshed. Moreover, it was a work the boys delighted in. If it was not the rose, it was near the rose. If it was not for them as yet to sail away in the afternoon, watched by all the village, at least they could take this small part in the great herring trade. And when they had shaken out the last of the nets, and received their wages, they stepped ashore with a certain pride; and generally they put both hands in their pockets as a real fisherman would do; and perhaps they would walk along the quays with a slight lurch, as if they, also, had been cramped up all the long night through, and felt somewhat unused to walking on first getting back to land.

Now these MacNicol boys, again imitating the

well-to-do among the fishermen, had each an account at the savings' bank; and the pence they got were carefully hoarded up. For if they wanted a new Glengarry cap, or if they wanted to buy a book telling them of all kinds of tremendous adventures at sea, or if it became necessary to purchase some more fishing-hooks at the grocer's shop, it was their own small store of wealth they had to look to; and so it came about that a penny was something to be seriously considered. When Rob MacNicol had to impose a fine of one penny, he knew it was a dire punishment; and if there was any alternative, the fine was rarely paid. The fund, therefore, which he had started for the purchase of an old and disused set of bagpipes, and which was to be made up of those fines, did not grow apace. Of course, being a chieftain, he must needs have a piper. The revels in the halls of Eilean-na-Rona lacked half their impressiveness through the want of the pipes. No doubt, Rob had a sort of suspicion that, if ever they should grow rich enough to buy the old set of bagpipes, he would have to play them himself; but even the most ignorant person can perceive that to be one's own piper must at least be better than to have no piper at all.

And now the captive Nicol MacNicol was led

to the edge of this black pit in the floor of the lower hall of the castle. On several occasions one or other of the boys had been lowered, for slighter offences, into this dungeon; but no one had ever been condemned to go to the bottom—if bottom there were. But Nicol did not flinch. He was satisfied of the justice of his sentence. He was aware he deserved the punishment. Above all he was determined to save that penny.

At the same time, when the other three had poised themselves so as to lower the rope gradually, and when he found himself descending into that black hole, he looked rather nervously below him. Of course he could see nothing. But there was a vague tradition that this dungeon was haunted by ghosts, vampires, warlocks, and other unholy things; and there was a chill, strange, earthy odour arising from it; and the walls that he scraped against were slimy and damp. He uttered no word, however; and those above kept slowly paying out the coil of rope.

Rob became somewhat concerned.

"It'll be no easy job to pull him back," he said in a whisper.

"It's as deep as the dungeon they put Donald Gorm Môr into," said his cousin Neil.

"Maybe there's no bottom at all," said Duncan, rather awe-stricken.

Suddenly a fearful thing happened. There was a cry from below—a quick cry of alarm; and at the same moment they were startled by a wild whizzing and whirring around them, as if a legion of fiends had rushed out of the pit. With a shriek of fright Duncan sprang back from the edge of the dungeon; and that with such force that he knocked over his two companions. Moreover, in falling, they let go the rope; when they rose again they looked round in the twilight, but could find no trace of it. It had slipped over the edge. And there was no sound from below.

Rob was the first to regain his senses. He rushed to the edge of the hole and stooped over.

"Nicol, are ye there?"

His heart jumped within him when he heard his brother's voice.

"Yes, I am; and the rope too. How am I to get up?"

Rob turned quickly.

"Duncan, down to the boat with ye! Loosen the lug-sail halyards, and bring them up—quick, quick!"

Duncan was off like a young roe. He slid down the crags; he dashed through the larch-wood; he jumped into the boat on the beach. Presently he was making his way as quickly back again, the

halyards coiled round his arm so as not to prevent his climbing.

"Nicol!" shouted Rob.

"Ay?"

"I am lowering the halyards to ye. Fasten them to the end of the rope."

"I canna see them."

"Grope all round till ye come to them."

And so, in process of time, the end of the rope was hauled up, and thereafter—to the great relief of everyone—and to his own, no doubt, Nicol appeared alive and well, though somewhat anxious to get away from the neighbourhood of that dungeon. He went immediately out into the warm summer air, followed by the others.

"Man, what a fright I got!" he said at last, having recovered his speech.

"Ay, and so did we," Neil admitted.

"What was't?" said he, timidly; as if almost afraid to put his own fears and suspicions into words.

"I dinna ken," Neil said, looking rather frightened.

"Ye dinna ken!" Rob MacNicol said, with a scornful laugh. "Ye ought to ken, then. It was nothing but a lot of bats; and Duncan yelled as if he had seen twenty warlocks; and knocked us

over, so that we lost the rope. Come! boys, begin your games now; the steamer will be in early the day."

Well, it seemed easier to dismiss superstitious fears out here in the sunlight. Perhaps it had been only bats, after all. Warlocks did not whirr in the air—at least, they were understood not to do so. Witches were supposed to reserve their aerial performances for the night-time. Perhaps it was only bats, as Rob asserted. Indeed, it would be safer—especialy in Rob's presence—to accept his explanation of the mystery. At the same time the younger boys occasionally darted a stealthy glance backward to that gloomy apartment that had so suddenly become alive with unknown things.

Then the games began. Rob had come to the conclusion that a wise chieftain should foster a love for national sports and pastimes; and to that end he had invented a system of marks, the winning of a large number of which entitled the holder to pecuniary or other reward. As for himself, his part was that of spectator and arbiter; he handicapped the competitors; he declared the prizes. On this occasion he ensconced himself in a niche of the ruins where he was out of the glare of the sun, and gracefully surrounded by masses of ivy; while his relatives hauled out to the middle of the green

plateau several trunks of fir-trees, of various sizes, that had been carefully lopped and pruned for the purpose of "tossing the caber." Well, they "tossed the caber," they "put the stone," they had wrestling-matches and other trials of strength, Rob the while surveying the scene with a critical eye, and reckoning up the proper number of marks. But now some milder diversions followed. Three or four planks, rudely nailed together, and forming a piece of rough flooring about two or three yards square, were hauled out from an archway, placed on the grass, and a piece of tarpaulin thrown over it. Then two of the boys took out their Jew's-harps—alas! alas! that was the only musical instrument within their reach, until the coveted bagpipes should be purchased—and gaily struck up with "Green grow the rashes, O!" as a preliminary flourish. What was this now? What but a performance of the famous sword-dance by that renowned and valiant henchman, Nicol MacNicol of Erisaig, in the kingdom of Scotland! Nicol, failing a couple of broadswords or four dirks, had got two pieces of rusty old iron and placed them cross-wise on the extemporised floor. With what skill and nimbleness he proceeded to execute this sword-dance,—which is no doubt the survival of some ancient mystic rite,—with what elegance he pointed his toes and held his arms

akimbo; with what amazing dexterity, in all the evolutions of the dance, he avoided touching the bits of iron; nay, with what intrepidity, at the most critical moment, he held his arms aloft and victoriously snapped his thumbs, it wants a Homeric chronicler to tell. It needs only be said here that, after it, Neil's "Highland Fling" was a comparative failure, though he, better than most, could give that outflung quiver of the foot which few can properly acquire, and without which the dancer of the "Highland Fling" might just as well go home and go to bed. The great chieftain, having regarded these and other performances with an observant eye, and having awarded so many marks to this one and to that, declared the games over, and invited the competitors one and all to a royal banquet.

It was a good deal more wholesome than most banquets, for it consisted of a scone and a glass of fresh milk apiece—butter being as yet beyond the means of the MacNicols. And it was a good deal more sensible than most banquets, for there was no speech-making after it. But there was some interesting conversation.

"Nicol, what did ye find in the dungeon?" Duncan said.

"Oh, man, it was a gruesome place," said Nicol,

who did not want to make too little of the perils he had encountered.

"What did ye see?"

"How could I see anything? But I felt plenty on the way down; and I'm sure it's fu' o' creeping things and beasts. And then when I was near the foot, I put my hand on something leevin', and it flew up and hit me; and in a meenit the whole place was alive. Man, what a noise it was! And then down came the rope, and I fell; and I got sich a clour on the head!"

"Nothing but bats!" said Rob, contemptuously.

"I think it was houlets,"* said Duncan, confidently; "for there was one in the wood when I was gaun through, and I nearly ran my head against him. He was sitting in one of the larches—man, he made a noise!"

"Ye've got your heads filled with nothing but witches and warlocks the day!" said Rob, impatiently, as he rose to his feet. "Come, and get the things into the basket. We maun be back in Erisaig before the *Glenara* comes in."

Very soon thereafter the small party made their way down again to the shore, and entered the war-galley of the chieftain, the halyards being restored

* *Anglicè*, owls.

to their proper use. There were no more signs of any squall; but the light, steady breeze was contrary; and as Robert of the Red Hand was rather anxious to get back before the steamer should arrive, and as he prided himself on his steering, he himself took the tiller, his cousin Neil being posted as look-out forward.

It was a tedious business this beating up against the contrary wind; but there was nothing the MacNicols delighted in so much as in sailing, and they had grown to be expert in handling a boat. And it needed all their skill to get anything out of these repeated tacks with this old craft, that had a sneaking sort of fashion of falling away to leeward. However, they had the constant excitement of putting about; and the day was fine; and they were greatly refreshed after their arduous pastimes by that banquet of scones and milk. Nor did they know that this was to be the last day of their careless boyish idleness; that never again would the great chieftain, heedless of what the morrow might bring forth, hold these high frolics in the halls of Eilean-na-Rona.

Patience and perseverance will beat even contrary winds; and at last, after one long tack stretching almost to the other side of Loch Scrone, they put about and managed to make the entrance to

the harbour, just weathering the rocks that had nearly destroyed them on their setting out. But here another difficulty waited them. Under the shelter of the low-lying hills, the harbour was in a dead calm. No sooner had they passed the rocks than they found themselves on water as smooth as glass, and there were no oars in the boat. For this oversight Rob MacNicol was not responsible; the fact being that oars were valuable in Erisaig, and not easily to be borrowed, whereas this old boat was at anybody's disposal. There was nothing for it but to sit and wait for a puff of wind.

Suddenly they heard a sound—the distant throbbing of the *Glenara's* paddles. Rob grew anxious. This old boat was right in the fairway of the steamer; and the question was whether, in coming round the point, she would see them in time to slow.

"I wish we were out of here," said he.

As a last resource, he threw the tiller into the boat, took up the helm, and tried to use this as a sort of paddle. But this was scarcely of any avail; and they could hear, though they could not see, that the steamer was almost at the point.

The next moment she appeared; and it seemed to them in their fright that she was almost upon them—towering away over them with her gigantic

bulk. They heard the scream of the steam-whistle, and the sharp "ping! ping!" of the indicator, as the captain tried to have the engines reversed.

It was too late. The way on the steamer carried her on, even when her paddles were stopped; and the next second her bows had gone clean into the old tarred boat, cutting her almost in two and heeling her over.

She sank at once. Then the passengers of the steamer rushed to the side to see what should become of the lads struggling in the water; the mate threw overboard to them a couple of life-buoys; and the captain shouted out to have a boat lowered. There was a great confusion.

Meanwhile all this had been witnessed by the father of the MacNicols, who had stood for a second or two as if paralysed. Then a sort of of spasm of action seized him, and, apparently not knowing what he was about, he threw open the gangway abaft the paddle-box and sprang into the sea.

CHAPTER III.

ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCES.

EVEN with this big steamer coming right down on them, Rob MacNicol did not lose his head. He knew that his two brothers and his cousin Neil could swim like water-rats; and as for himself, though he would have given a good deal to get rid of his boots, he did not fear being able to get ashore.

But there was no time to think.

"Jump clear of the boat!" he shouted to his companions.

The next second came the dreadful crash. The frail old boat seemed to be pressed onwards and downwards, as if the steamer had run right over her. Then Rob found himself in the water, and very deep in the water too. The next thing he perceived was a great greenish-white thing over his head; and as he knew that that was the hull of the steamer, he struck away from it with all the strength at his disposal. He remembered afterwards experiencing a sort of hatred of that shining green

thing, and thinking it looked hideous and dangerous, like a shark.

However, the next moment he rose to the surface, blew the water out of his mouth, and looked around. There was a life-buoy within a yard of him, and the people on the steamer were calling to him to lay hold of it; but he had never touched one of these things, and he preferred to trust to himself, heavy as he felt his boots to be. It was the others he was looking after. Neil, he perceived, was already off for the shore, swimming hand over hand, as if a sword-fish were after him. Nicol was being hauled up the side of the steamer at the end of a rope, just as he had been hauled up from the Eilean-na-Rona dungeon; and his brother Duncan had seized hold of the helm that had been cast loose when the boat went down. Satisfied that every one was safe, Rob himself struck out for the side of the steamer, and was speedily hauled on board, presently finding himself on deck with his two dripping companions.

The strange thing was that his father was nowhere to be seen, and even the captain looked round and asked where John MacNicol was. At the same moment a woman, all trembling, came forward and asked the mate if they had got the man out.

"What man?" said he.

She said she had been standing by the paddle-box, and that one of the sailors, the moment the accident had occurred, had opened the gangway and jumped into the water, no doubt with the intention of rescuing the boys. She had not seen him come up again, for just as he went down the steamer backed.

At this news there was some little consternation. The mate called aloud for John MacNicol; there was no answer. He ran to the other side of the steamer; nothing was visible on the smooth water. They searched everywhere, and the boat that had been lowered was pulled about, but the search was in vain. The woman's story was the only explanation of this strange disappearance; but the sailors suspected more than they dared to suggest to the bewildered lads. They suspected that old MacNicol had dropped into the water just before the paddles had made their first backward revolution, and that in coming to the surface he had been struck by one of the floats. They said nothing of this, however; and as the search proved to be quite useless, the *Glenara* steamed slowly onward to the quay.

It was not until the next afternoon that they recovered the body of old MacNicol; and from cer-

tain appearances on the corpse, it was clear that he had been struck down by the paddles in his effort to reach and help his sons. That was a sad evening for Rob MacNicol. It was his first introduction to the cruel facts of life. And amid his sorrow for the loss of one who, in a sort of rough and reticent way, had been very kind and even affectionate to him, Rob was vaguely aware that on himself now rested the responsibility for the upbringing of his two brothers and his cousin. He sat up late that night, long after the others were asleep, thinking of what he should do. In the midst of this silence the door was quietly opened, and Daft Sandy came into the small room.

"What do ye want at this time o' night?" said Rob angrily, for he had been startled.

The old, bent, half-witted man looked cautiously at the bed, in which Neil lay fast asleep.

"Whisht, Rob, my man," he said in a whisper; "I waited till every one in Erisaig was asleep. Ay, ay! it's a bad day this day for you. And what are ye going to do now, Rob? Ye'll be taking to the fishing?"

"Oh, ay; I'll be taking to the fishing!" said Rob bitterly, for he had been having his dreams also, and had turned from them with a sigh. "Of course I'll be taking to the fishing! And maybe

ye'll tell me where I am to get £40 to buy a boat, and where I am to get £30 to buy nets? Maybe ye'll tell me that, Sandy?"

"The bank——"

"What does the bank ken about me? They would as soon think of throwing the money into Loch Scrone."

"But ye ken, Rob, Coll Macdougall would give ye a share in his boat for £12."

"Twelve pounds! Man, ye're just daft, Sandy. Where am I to get £12?"

"Well, well, Rob," said the old man coming nearer, and speaking still more mysteriously, "listen to what I tell ye. Some day or other ye'll be taking to the fishing; and when that day comes I will put something in your way. Ay, ay; the fishermen about Erisaig dinna know everything; come to me, Rob, my man, and I'll tell ye something about the herring. Ye are a good lad, Rob; many's the herring I've got from ye when I wouldna go near the shore for they mischievous bairns; and when once ye have a boat and nets o' your own I will tell ye something. Daft Sandy is no so daft, maybe. Have ye ony tobacco, Rob?"

Rob said he had no tobacco; and making sure that Daft Sandy had come to him with a pack of nonsense merely as an excuse to borrow money for

tobacco, he bundled him out of the house and went to bed.

Rob was anxious that his brothers and cousin, and himself, should present a respectable appearance at the funeral; and in these humble preparations nearly all their small savings were swallowed up. The funeral expenses were paid by the Steamboat Company. Then after the funeral, the few people who were present departed to their own homes, no doubt imagining that the MacNicol boys would be able to live as hitherto they had lived—that is, anyhow.

But there was a kindly man called Jamieson, who kept the grocery shop, and he called Rob in as the boys passed home.

"Rob," said he, "ye maun be doing something now. There's a cousin of mine has a whisky shop in the Saltmarket in Glasgow, and I could get ye a place there."

Rob's very gorge rose at the notion of his having to serve in a whisky shop in Glasgow. That would be to abandon all the proud ambitions of his life. Nevertheless, he had been thinking seriously about the duty he owed to these lads, his companions, who were now dependent on him. So he swallowed his pride and said,

"How much would he give me?"

"I think I could get him to give ye four shillings a week. That would keep ye very well."

"Keep me?" said Rob. "Ay, but what's to become o' Duncan and Neil and Nicol?"

"They must shift for themselves," the grocer answered.

"That winna do," said Rob, and he left the shop.

He overtook his companions and asked them to go along to some rocks overlooking the harbour. They sat down there—the harbour below them with all its picturesque boats, and masses of drying nets, and what not.

"Neil," said Rob to his cousin, "we'll have to think about things now. There will be no more Eilean-na-Rona for us. We have just about as much left as will pay the lodgings this week, and Nicol must go three nights a week to the night school. What we get for stripping the nets 'll no do now."

"It will not," said Neil.

"Mr. Jamieson was offering me a place in Glasgow, but it is not very good, and I think we will do better if we keep together. Neil," said he, "if we had only a net, do ye not think we could trawl for cuddies?"*

* "Cuddies" is the familiar name in those parts for young saithe. "Trawling," again, means there the use of an ordinary seine.

And again he said, "Neil, do ye not think we could make a net for ourselves out of the old rags lying at the shed?"

And again he said, "Do ye think that Peter, the tailor, would lend us his old boat for a shilling a week?"

It was clear that Rob had been carefully considering the details of this scheme of co-operation. And it was eagerly welcomed, not only by Neil, but also by the brothers Duncan and Nicol, who had been frightened by the thought of Rob going away to Glasgow. The youngest of all, Nicol, boldly declared that he could mend nets as well as any man in Erisaig.

No sooner was the scheme thoroughly discussed, than it was determined, under Rob's direction, to set to work at once. The woman who kept the lodgings and cooked their food for them had intimated to them that they need be in no hurry to pay her for a week or two until they should find some employment; but they had need of money, or the equivalent of money, in other directions. Might not old Peter, who was a grumbling and ill-tempered person, insist on being paid in advance? Then, before they could begin to make a net out of the torn and rejected pieces lying about the shed, they must needs have a ball of twine. So

Rob bade his brothers and cousin go away and get their rude fishing-rods and betake themselves to the rocks at the mouth of the harbour, and see what fish they could get for him during the afternoon.

Meanwhile he himself went along to the shed which was used as a sort of storage-house by some of the fishermen; and here he found lying about plenty of pieces of net that had been cast aside in the process of mending. This business of mending the nets is the last straw on the back of the tired-out fisherman. When he has met with an accident to his nets during the night, when he has fouled on some rocks in dragging them in, for example, it is a desperately fatiguing affair to set to work to mend them when he gets ashore, dead beat with the labours of the morning. The fishermen, for what reason I do not know, will not entrust this work to their wives; they will rather, after having been out all night, keep at it themselves, though they drop off to sleep every few minutes. It is not to be wondered at, then, that often, instead of trying to laboriously mend holes here or there, they should cut out a large piece of torn net bodily and tack on a fresh piece. The consequence is, that in a place like Erisaig there is generally plenty of netting to be got for the asking; which is a

good thing for gardeners who want to protect currant bushes from the blackbirds, and who will take the trouble to patch the pieces together.

Rob was allowed to pick out a large number of pieces that he thought might serve his purpose; and these he carried off home. But then came the question of floats and sinkers. Sufficient pieces of cork to form the floats might in time be got about the beach; but the sinkers had all been removed from the cast-away netting. In this extremity, Rob bethought of rigging up a couple of guy-poles, as the salmon-fishers call them, one for each end of the small seine he had in view; so that these guy-poles, with a lump of lead at the lower end, would keep the net vertical while it was being dragged through the water. All this took up the best part of the afternoon; for he had to cadge about before he could get a couple of stout poles; and he had to bargain with the blacksmith for a lump of lead. Then he walked along to the point where the other MacNicols were busy fishing.

They had been lucky with their lines and bait. On the rocks beside them lay two or three small codling, a large flounder, two good-sized lythe, and nearly a dozen saithe. Rob got hold of these; washed them clean to make them look fresh and

smart; put a string through their gills, and marched off with them to the village.

He felt no shame in trying to sell fish: was it not the whole trade of the village? He walked into the grocer's shop.

"Will ye buy some fish?" said he, "they're fresh."

The grocer looked at them.

"What do you want?"

"A ball of twine."

"Let me tell ye this, Rob,' said the grocer, severely, "that a lad in your place should be thinking of something else than fleein' a dragon." *

"I dinna want to flee any dragon," said Rob, "I want to mend a net."

"Oh, that is quite different," said the grocer; and then he added, with a good-natured laugh, "Are ye going to be a fisherman, Rob?"

"I will see," Rob said.

So he had his ball of twine—and a very large one it was. Off he set to his companions.

"Come away, boys, I have other work for ye. Now, Nicol, my man, ye'll show us what ye can do in the mending of nets. Ye havena been telling lies?"

Well, it took them several days of very hard

* "Fleein' a dragon"—flying a kite.

and constant work before they rigged up something resembling a small seine; and then Rob affixed his guy-poles; and they went to the grocer and got from him a lot of old rope on the promise to give him a few fresh fish whenever they happened to have a good haul. Then Rob proceeded to his fateful interview with Peter the tailor.

Peter was a sour-visaged, gray-headed old man, who wore horn-rimmed spectacles. He was sitting cross-legged on his bench when Rob entered.

"Peter, will ye lend me your boat?"

"I will not."

"Why will ye no lend me the boat?"

"Do I want it sunk, as ye sunk that boat the other day? Go away with ye. Ye're an idle lot, you MacNicols. Ye'll be drooned some day."

"We want it for the fishing, Peter," said Rob, who took no notice of the tailor's ill-temper. "I'll give ye a shilling a week for the loan o't."

"A shilling a week!" said Peter with a laugh. "A shilling a week! Where's your shilling?"

"There," said Rob, putting it plump down on the bench.

The tailor looked at the shilling; took it up, bit it, and put it in his pocket.

"Very well," said he, "but mind, if ye sink my boat, ye'll have three pounds to pay."

Rob went back eager and joyous. Forthwith, a thorough inspection of the boat was set about by the lads in conjunction; they tested the oars; they tested the thole-pins; they had a new piece of cork put into the bottom. For that evening, when it grew a little more towards dusk, they would make their first cast with their net.

Yes; and that evening, when it had quite turned to dusk, the people of Erisaig were startled with a new proclamation. It was Neil MacNicol, standing in front of the cottages, and boldly calling forth these words:

"Is there any one wanting Cuddies? There are Cuddies to be sold at the West Slip, for a Sixpence a Hunderd!"

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER ENDEAVOUR.

That was indeed an anxious time when the four MacNicols proceeded to try the net on which they had spent so much fore-thought and labour. They had no great expectation of catching fish this evening; their object was rather to try whether the ropes would hold, whether the floats would be sufficient, and whether Rob's guy-poles would keep the net vertical. So they got into the tailor's boat, and rowed away round the point to a sandy bay where they had nothing to fear from rocks on this their first experiment.

It was, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, nearly dusk—an excellent time for catching saithe, if saithe were about. The net had been carefully placed in the stern of the boat, so that it would run out easily, the rope attached to the guy-pole neatly coiled on the top. Rob was very silent as his two brothers pulled away at the long oars. He knew what depended on this trial. They had just enough money left to settle with their land-

lady on the following evening; and Nicol's school-fees had to be paid in advance.

They rowed quietly into this little bay, which, though of a sandy bottom, was pretty deep. Rob had resolved to take the whole responsibility of the experiment on himself. He landed his brothers and his cousin, giving the latter the end of the rope attached to the guy-pole; then he quietly pulled away again from the shore.

When the length of the rope was exhausted, he himself took the guy-pole and gently dropped it over, to prevent splashing; and as he did so the net began to pay out. He pulled slowly, just to see how the thing would work; and it seemed to work very well. The net went out freely, and apparently sank properly; from the top of the guy-pole to the stern of the boat you could see nothing but the line of the floats on the smooth water. But the net was a small one: soon it would be exhausted; so Rob began to pull round towards the shore again. At the same time Neil, who had had his instructions, began to haul in his end of the net gently, so that by and by, when Rob had run the boat on the beach, and jumped out with his rope in his hand, the line of floats began to form a semicircle that was gradually narrowing and coming nearer the shore.

It was a moment of great excitement, and not a word was spoken. For although this was ostensibly only a trial to see how the net would work, each lad in his secret heart was wondering whether there might not be a haul of fish captured from the mysterious deep; and not one of them, not Rob himself, could tell whether this very considerable weight they were gradually pulling in was the weight of the net merely, or the weight of fish, or the weight of seaweed.

The semicircle of the floats came nearer and nearer, all eyes striving to pierce the clear water.

"I hope the rope'll no break," said Rob, anxiously, for the weight was great.

"And it's only seaweed!" said Duncan, in a tone of great disappointment.

But Rob's eye had been caught by some unusual appearance in the water. It seemed troubled somehow; and more especially near the line of floats.

"Is it?" said he; and he hastily bade Duncan take the rope and haul it gently in. He himself began to take up handfuls of small stones, and fling them into the sea close by the two guy-poles, so that the fish should be frightened back into the net. And as the semicircle grew still smaller, it was very obvious that, though there might be sea-

weed in the net, it was not all seaweed. By this time the guy-poles had been got ashore; they were now hauling at the net itself.

"Quicker now, boys!" Rob called out. "Man alive, look at that!"

All the space of water now enclosed by the net was seen to be in a state of commotion; the net itself was being violently shaken; here and there a fish leapt into the air.

"Steady, boys! Don't jerk, or ye'll tear the net to bits!" Rob called out in great excitement.

For behold! when they had hauled this great weight up on the shore with a final swoop, there was something there that almost bewildered them —a living mass of fish floundering about in the wet seaweed—some springing into the air—others flopping out on to the sand—many helplessly entangled in the meshes. It was a wonderful sight; but their astonishment and delight had to give place to action.

"Run for the boat, Nicol! There's more where they came from!" Rob shouted.

Nicol rushed along to the boat; shoved her out; pulled her along to where his companions were; and backed her, stern in. They had no bucket; they had to fling the fish into the bottom of the boat. But this business of stripping the nets

—shaking out the seaweed and freeing the enmeshed fish—was familiar to them; and they all worked with a will. There was neither a dog-fish nor a conger in all the haul, so they had no fears for their hands. In less than a quarter of an hour the net was back in the boat, properly arranged, and Rob ready to start again—at a place farther along the beach.

They were soon full of eagerness. In fact, they were too eager; and this time they hauled in with such might and main that, just as the guy-poles were nearing the shore, the rope attached to one of them broke. But Rob instantly jumped into the water, seized the pole itself, and hauled it out with him. Here, also, they had a considerable take of fish; but there was a heavy weight of seaweed besides; and one or two rents showed that they had pulled the net over rocks. So they went back to their former ground; and so successful were they, and so eagerly did they work, that when the coming darkness warned them to return to Erisaig, they had the stern of the boat nearly full of very fairly-sized saithe.

Neil regarded this wonderful treasure of the deep, as he laboured away at his oar.

"Man, Rob, who could have expected such a lot? And what will ye do with them now? Will

ye send them to Glasgow by the *Glenara*?—I think Mr. M'Aulay would lend us a box or two. Or will ye clean them and dry them, and sell them from a barrow?"

"We canna start two or three trades all at once," said Rob, after a minute or two. "I think we'll sell them straight off, if the folk are no in bed. Ye'll gang and see, Neil; and I'll count the fish at the slip."

"And what will I say ye will take for them?"

"I think I would ask a sixpence a hundred," said Rob, slowly; for he had been considering that question for the last ten minutes.

At length they got in to the slip; and Neil at once proceeded to inform the inhabitants of Erisaig, who were still lounging about in the dusk, that for sixpence a hundred they could have fine fresh "cuddies." It might be thought that in a place like Erisaig, which was one of the headquarters of the herring-trade, it would be difficult to sell fish of any description. But the fact was that the herring were generally contracted for by the agents of the salesmen, and shipped directly for Glasgow, so that they were but rarely retailed in Erisaig itself; moreover, people accustomed to herring their whole life through preferred variety—a freshly-caught mackerel or flounder, or what not. Perhaps, however, it was

more curiosity than anything else that brought the neighbours along to the west slip, to see what the MacNicols had been about.

Well, there was a good deal of laughing and jeering, especially on the part of the men (these were idlers: the fishermen were all gone away in the boats); but the women, who had to provide for their households, knew when they had a cheap bargain; and the sale of the "cuddies" proceeded briskly. Indeed, when the people had gone away again, and the four lads were by themselves on the quay, there was not a single "cuddy" left—except a dozen that Rob had put into a can of water, to be given to the grocer in the morning as part payment for the loan of the ropes.

"What do ye make it altogether?" said Neil to Rob, who was counting the money.

"Three shillings and ninepence."

"Three shillings and ninepence! Man, that's a lot. Will ye put it in the savings-bank?"

"No, I will not," said Rob. "I'm no satisfied with the net, Neil. We must have better ropes all the way round; and whatever money we can spare we maun spend on the net. Man, think of this now: if we were to fall in with a big haul of herring or Johnnie-Dories, and lose them through

the breaking of the net, I think ye would jist sit down and greet."

It was wise counsel, as events showed. For one afternoon, some ten days afterwards, they set out as usual. They had been having varying success; but they had earned more than enough to pay their landlady, the tailor, and the schoolmaster; and every farthing beyond these necessary expenses they had spent on the net. They had replaced all the rotten pieces with sound twine; they had got new ropes; they had deepened it, moreover, and added some more sinkers to help the guy-poles. Well, on this afternoon, Duncan and Nicol, being the two youngest, were as usual pulling away to one of the small quiet bays, and Rob was idly looking around him, when he saw something on the surface of the sea at some distance off that excited a sudden interest. It was what the fishermen call "broken water"—a seething produced by a shoal of fish.

"Look, look, Neil!" he cried. "It's either mackerel or herring; will we try for them?"

The greatest excitement at once prevailed on board. The younger brothers pulled their hardest to make for that rough patch on the water. Rob undid the rope from the guy-pole, and got this last ready to drop overboard. He knew very well that

they ought to have had two boats to execute this manœuvre; but was there not a chance for them if they were to row hard, in a circle, and pick up the other end of the net when they came to it? So Neil took a third oar: two rowing one side and one the other was just what they wanted.

They came nearer and nearer that strange hissing of the water. They kept rather away from it; and Rob quietly dropped the guy-pole over, paying out the net rapidly, so that it should not be dragged after the boat. Then the three lads pulled hard, and in a circle, so that at last they were sending the bow of the boat straight towards the floating guy-pole. The other guy-pole was near the stern of the boat, the rope made fast to one of the thwarts. In a few minutes Rob had caught this first guy-pole: they were now possessed of the two ends of the net.

But the water had grown suddenly quiet. Had the fish dived and escaped them? There was not the motion of a fin anywhere; and yet the net seemed heavy to haul.

"Rob," said Neil, almost in a whisper, "we've got them!"

"We havena got them," was the reply; "but they're in the net. Man, I wonder if it'll stand out."

Then it was that the diligent patching and the strong tackle told. The question was not with regard to the strength of the net, it was rather with regard to the strength of the younger lads; for they had succeeded in enclosing a goodly portion of a large shoal of mackerel, and the weight seemed more than they could get into the boat. But even the strength of the younger ones seemed to grow into the strength of giants when they saw through the clear water a great moving mass like quicksilver. And then the wild excitement of hauling in; the difficulty of it; the danger of the fish escaping; the warning cries of Rob; the clatter made by the mackerel; the possibility of swamping the boat altogether, as all the four were straining their utmost at one side. Indeed, by an awkward tilt at one moment some hundred or two of the mackerel were seen to glide away; but perhaps that rendered it all the more practicable to get into the boat what remained. When that heaving, sparkling, jerking mass of quicksilver at last was captured—shining all through the brown meshes of the net—the younger lads sat down quite exhausted, wet through, and happy.

"Man, Rob, what do ye think of that?" said Neil, in amazement.

"What do I think?" said Rob; "I think that if

we could get two or three more hauls like that I would soon buy a share in Coll MacDougall's boat and go after the herring."

They had no more thought that afternoon of "cuddy"-fishing after this famous take. Rob and Neil—the younger ones having had their share—rowed back to Erisaig; then Rob left the boat at the slip, and walked up to the office of the fish-salesman.

"What will ye give me for mackerel?" he said.

The salesman laughed at him, thinking he had caught a few with rods and flies.

"I'm no buying mackerel," said he; "no by the half-dozen."

"I have half a boat-load," said Rob.

The salesman glanced towards the slip, and saw the tailor's boat pretty low in the water.

"Is that mackerel?"

"Yes, it is mackerel."

"Where were you buying them?"

"I was not buying them anywhere. I caught them myself—my brothers and me."

"I do not believe you."

"I cannot help that, then," said Rob. "But where had I the money to buy mackerel from any one?"

The salesman glanced at the boat again.

"I'll go down to the slip with you."

So he and Rob together walked down to the slip, and the salesman had a look at the mackerel. Apparently he had arrived at the conclusion that, after all, Rob was not likely to have bought a cargo of mackerel as a commercial speculation.

"Well, I will buy the mackerel from you," he said. "I will give you half-a-crown the hundred for them."

"Half-a-crown!" said Rob. "I will take three-and sixpence the hundred for them."

"I will not give it to you. But I will give you three shillings the hundred, and a good price, too."

"Very well, then," said Rob.

So the MacNicols got altogether £2 : 8s. for that load of mackerel; and out of that Rob spent the eight shillings on still further improving the net; the £2 going into the savings bank. It is to be imagined that after this they kept a pretty sharp look-out for "broken water;" but of course they could not expect to run across a shoal of mackerel every day.

However, as time went on, with bad luck and with good, and by dint of hard and constant work whatever the luck was, the sum in the savings bank slowly increased; and at last Rob announced to his

companions that they had saved enough to enable him to purchase a share in Coll MacDougall's boat. Neil and Duncan and Nicol were sorely disinclined to part with Rob; but yet they saw clearly enough that he was getting too old to remain at the cuddy-fishing, and they knew they could now work that line of business quite well by themselves. What Rob said was this:

"You see it is a great chance for all of us that I should get a share in the boat; for what I make at the herring-fishing will go into the bank along with what you make at the trawling by the shore. And who knows, if we all work hard enough, who knows but we may have a herring-skiff all to ourselves some day? And that would be a fine thing to have a herring-skiff to ourselves, and our own nets; and all that we earned our own, and not in debt to any one whatever."

Of course that was a dream of the future; for a herring-skiff costs a considerable sum of money, and so do nets. But in the meantime they were all agreed that what Rob counselled was wise; and a share in Coll MacDougall's boat was accordingly purchased, after a great deal of bargaining.

A proud lad was Rob MacNicol the afternoon he came along to the wharf to take his place in the boat that was now partly his own. His brothers

and cousin were there to see him (envious a little, perhaps; but proud also, for part of their money had gone to buy the share). He had likewise purchased second-hand a huge pair of boots that were as soft and pliable as grease could make them; and he carried a brand-new yellow oilskin in his hand that crackled as he walked. Neil, Duncan, and Nicol watched him throw his oilskin into the boat, and go forward to the bow, and take his place there at the oar; and they knew very well that if there was any one who could pull a huge oar better than Rob MacNicol, it was not in Erisaig that that person was to be found. Then the big herring-skiff passed away out to the point in the red glow of the evening; and Rob had achieved the first great ambition of his life.

CHAPTER V.

THE HIGH ROAD.

THAT was not a very good year for the herring-fishing on this part of the coast; but at all events Rob MacNicol learned all the lore of the fishermen, and grew as skilled as any of them in guessing at the whereabouts of the herring; while at the end of the season he had more than replaced the £12 he had used of the common fund. Then he returned to the tailor's boat, and worked with his brothers and cousin. He was proud to know that he had a share in a fishing-skiff; but he was not too proud to turn his hand to anything else that might help.

These MacNicol boys had grown to be greatly respected in Erisaig. The audacity of four "wastrel laddies" setting up to be fishermen on their own account had at first amused the neighbours; but their success and their conduct generally, soon raised them above ridicule; and the women especially were warm in their commendation. They saw how Rob gradually improved the appearance

of his brothers and cousin. All of them had boots and stockings now. Not only that, but they had white shirts and jackets of blue cloth to go to church with on Sunday; and each of them put twopence in the collection-plate just as if they had all been sons of a rich shopkeeper. Moreover, they were setting an example to the other boys about. Four of these, indeed, combined to start a cuddy-fishing business similar to that of Rob's. Neil was rather angry; but Rob was not afraid of any competition. He asked the new boys to come and see how he had rigged up the guy-poles. He said there were plenty of fish in the sea; and the market was large enough. But when the new boys asked him to lend them some money to buy new ropes he distinctly declined. He had got on without borrowing himself.

It was a long and dreary winter; but Nicol had nearly finished with his schooling; and the seine-net had been largely added to; and every inch of it overhauled. Then the cuddy-fishing began again; and soon Rob, who was now nearly eighteen, and remarkably firm-set for his age, would be away after the herring.

One day, as Rob was going along the main thoroughfare of Erisaig, the banker called him into his office.

"Rob" said he, "have ye seen the skiff* at the building-yard?"

"Ay," said Rob rather wistfully, for many a time he had stood and looked at the beautiful lines of the new craft. "She's a splendid boat."

"And ye've seen the new drift-net in the shed?"

"Ay, I have that."

"Well, ye see, Rob," continued Mr. Bailie, regarding him with a good-natured look; "I had the boat built and the net bought as a kind of speculation; and I was thinking of getting a crew through from Tarbert. They say the herring are beginning to come about some of the western lochs. Now I have been hearing a good deal about you, Rob, from the neighbours. They say that you, and your brothers and cousin, are sober and diligent lads; and that you are good seamen, and careful. Then you have been a while at the herring fishing yourself. Now do you think you could manage that new boat?"

"Me!" said Rob, with his eyes staring, and his face aflame.

"I go by what the neighbours say, Rob. They say ye are a prudent lad, not over venturesome;

* Though the herring-skiffs are so-called, they are comparatively large and powerful boats, and will stand a heavy sea.

and I think I could trust my property to ye. What say ye?"

In his excitement at the notion of being made master of such a beautiful craft, Rob forgot the respect he ought to have shown in addressing so great a person as the banker. He blurted out—

"Man, I would just like to try!"

"I will pay ye a certain sum per week while the fishing lasts," continued Mr. Bailie, "and ye will hire what crew ye think fit. Likewise I will give ye a percentage on the takes. Will that do?"

Rob was quite bewildered. All he could say was—

"I am obliged to ye, sir. Will ye wait for a minute till I see Neil."

And very soon the wild rumour ran through Erisaig that no other than Rob MacNicol had been appointed master of the new skiff, the *Mary of Argyle;* and that he had taken his brothers and cousin as his crew. Some of the women shook their heads; and said it was a shame to let such mere lads go to the herring-fishing—for some night or other they would be drowned; but the men, who knew something of Rob's seamanship, had no fear at all; and their only doubt was about the younger lads being up to the heavy work of hauling in the nets in the morning.

But their youth was a fault that would mend week by week. In the meantime, Rob, having sold out his share in MacDougall's boat, bought jerseys and black boots and yellow oil-skins for his companions; so that the new crew, if they were rather slightly built, looked smart enough, as they went down to the slip to overhaul the *Mary of Argyle*.

With what a pride they regarded the long and shapely lines of her—the yellow beams shining with varnish; the tall mast at the bow, with its stout cordage; the brand-new stove, that was to boil their tea for them in the long watches of the night; the magnificent oars; the new sheets and sails—everything spick and span. And this great mass of ruddy netting lying in the shed, with its perfect floats and accurate sinkers—this was not like the makeshift that had captured the cuddies.

Then on the morning that the *Mary of Argyle* put to sea on her trial trip, her owner was on board; but he merely sat on a thwart. It was Rob who was at the tiller; Rob wanted to try the boat; the owner wanted to observe the crew. And first of all she sailed lightly out of the harbour, with the wind on her beam; then outside, the breeze being fresher, they let her away down Loch Scrone, with the brilliant new lug-sail bellying out; then they brought her round, and fought her up against the stiff wind

—Rob's brief words of command being obeyed with the rapidity of lightning.

"Well, what do ye think of her?" said Mr. Bailie to his young skipper.

Rob's face was aglow with pride.

"I think she's like a race-horse!" he said. "I think she would lick any boat in Erisaig Bay."

"But it is not to run races I have handed her over to ye. You must be careful, Rob; and run back if there's any squally weather about. I'll no be vexed if you're over cautious. For ye know if anything was to happen to one of they lads, the people would say I had done wrong in lippening* a boat to such a young crew."

"Well, sir," said Rob, boldly, "ye have seen them work the boat. Do they look like lads who do not know what sailing a boat is?"

Mr. Bailie laughed, and said no more.

Then came the afternoon on which they were to set out for the first time after the herring. All Erisaig came out to see; and Rob was a proud lad as he stepped on board (with the lazy indifference of the trained fisherman very well imitated) and took his seat as stroke oar. The afternoon was lovely; there was not a breath of wind; the setting

* *lippening*—trusting.

sun shone over the bay; and the *Mary of Argyle* went away across the shining waters with the long white oars dipping with the precision of clock-work. It was not until they were at the mouth of the harbour that something occurred which seemed likely to turn this brave setting-out into ridicule.

This was Daft Sandy, who rowed his punt right across the path of the *Mary of Argyle*, and, as she came up, called to Rob.

"What is it ye want?" Rob called to him.

"I want to come on board, Rob," the old man said, as he now rowed his punt up to the stern of the skiff.

"I have no tobacco, and I have no whisky," Rob said impatiently. "There'll be no tobacco or whisky on board this boat so long as I have anything to do with her; so ye needna come for that, Sandy."

"It's no for that," said Daft Sandy, as, with the painter of his boat in one hand, he gripped the stern of the skiff with the other.

Now Rob was angry. Many of the Erisaig people would still be watching their setting-out; and was it to be supposed that they had taken this doited old body as one of the crew? But then Daft Sandy was at this moment clambering into the boat; and Rob could not get up and fight with an old man, who would probably tumble into the water.

"Rob," said he, in a whisper, as he fastened the painter of his punt, "I promised I would tell ye something. I'll show ye how to find the herring."

"You!" said Rob, derisively.

"Ay, me, Rob, I'll make a rich man of you. I will tell you something about the herring that not any one in Erisaig knows—that not any one in Scotland knows."

"Why havena ye made a rich man of yourself, Sandy?" said Rob, with more good nature.

The half-witted creature did not seem to see the point of this remark.

"Ay, ay," he said, "many is the time I was thinking of telling this one or telling that one; but when I would go near it was always 'Daft Sandy!' and 'Daft Sandy!' and there was always the peltin' wi' the broken herring—except from you, Rob. And I was saying to myself that when Rob MacNicol has a boat of his own, then I will show him how to find the herring, and no one will know but himself."

By this time the MacNicols had taken to their oars again: and they had pulled outside the harbour, the old punt still astern. Then Rob had to speak plainly.

"Look here, Sandy, I will not put ye ashore by force. But I canna have your punt at the stern of the boat. It'll be in the way of the nets."

But the old man was more eager than ever. If they would only pull into the bay hard by, he would anchor the punt and leave it. He begged Rob to take him for that night's fishing. He had discovered a sure sign of the presence of herring—unknown to any of the fishermen. What was the phosphorescence in the sea?—the nights were too clear for that. What was the mere breaking of the water?—a moving shoal that might escape. But this sign that the old man had discovered went to show the presence of large masses of fish, stationary and deep: it was the appearance on the surface of the water of small air-bubbles. He was sure of it. He had watched it. It was a secret worth a bankful of money. And again, he besought Rob to let him accompany him; Rob had stopped the lads when they were throwing herring at him; Rob alone should have the benefit of this valuable discovery of his.

Rob MacNicol was doubtful; for he had never heard of this thing before; but he could not resist the importunities of the old half-witted creature. They pulled in and anchored the punt; then they set forth again, rowing slowly as the light faded out of the sky, and keeping a watch all around on the almost glassy seas.

There was no sign of any herring; no solan geese sweeping down; no breaking of the water;

and none of the other boats, so far as they could make out, had as yet shot their nets. The night was coming on, and they were far away from Erisaig; but still old Sandy kept up his watch, studying the surface of the water, as if he expected to find pearls floating there. And at last, in great excitement, he grasped Rob's arm. Leaning over the side of the boat, they could just make out in the dusk a great quantity of minute air-bubbles rising to the surface of the sea.

"Put some stones along with the sinkers, Rob," the old man said in a whisper, as if he were afraid of the herring hearing; "go deep, deep, deep."

Well, they quietly let out the seemingly interminable drift-net as they pulled gently along, and when that was accomplished they took in the long oars again. Nicol lit up the little stove, and proceeded to boil the tea. The bundle containing their supper was opened, and Sandy had his share and his can of tea like the others.

They had a long time of waiting to get over through the still summer night, but still Rob was strangely excited, wondering whether Sandy had really, in pottering about, discovered a new indication of the whereabouts of the herring, or whether he was to go back to Erisaig in the morning with empty nets. There was another thing too. Had

he shown himself too credulous before his companions? Had he done right in listening to what might be only a foolish tale? The others began to doze off; Rob not. He did not sleep a wink all night.

Well, to let out a long drift-net, which sometimes goes as deep as fifteen fathoms, is an easy affair, but to haul it in again is a sore task; and when it happens to be laden, and heavily-laden, with silver-gleaming fish, that is a break-back business for four young lads. But there is such a thing as the nervous, eager, joyous, strength of success; and if you are hauling in yard after yard of a dripping net, only to find the brown meshes all bestarred with the silver herring,—then even young lads can work like men. Daft Sandy was laughing all the while.

"Rob, my man, what think ye o' the air-bubbles now? Maybe Daft Sandy is no sae daft. And do you think I would be going and telling any one but yourself, Rob? Do you think I would be going and telling any one that was throwing the broken herring at me, and always a curse for me when I went near the skiffs, and not once a glass of whisky for an old man? Well, Rob, I will not ask you for a glass of whisky. If you say it is a teetotal boat, it is a teetotal boat; but you will not forget to give

me whole herring for bait when you are going out of the bay?"

Rob could not speak; he was breathless. Nor was their work nearly done when they had got in the net with all its splendid gleaming treasure. There was not a breath of wind; they had to set to work to pull the heavy boat back to Erisaig. The gray of the dawn gave way to a glowing sunrise; when they at length reached the quay, dead-beat with fatigue and want of sleep, the people were all about.

They were dead-beat; but there were ten crans of herring in that boat. And you should have seen Rob's air when he counselled Neil and Duncan and Nicol to go away home and have a sleep, and when he loftily called on two or three of the boys on the quay to come in and strip the nets. But the three MacNicols were far too excited to go away. They wanted to see the great heap of fish ladled out in baskets on to the quay. Mr. Bailie came along not long after that, and shook hands with Rob, and congratulated him; for it turned out that while not another Erisaig boat had that night got more than from two to three crans, the *Mary of Argyle* had turned ten crans—as good herring as ever were got out of Loch Scrone.

Well, the MacNicol lads were now in a fair way

of earning an independent and honourable living, and this sketch of how they had struggled into that position from being mere wastrels—living about the shore like so many curlews—may fitly cease here. Sometimes they had good luck, and sometimes bad luck; but always they had the advantage of that additional means of discovering the whereabouts of the herring that had been imparted to them by Daft Sandy. And the last that the present writer heard of them was this, that they had bought outright the *Mary of Argyle* and her nets from the banker; and that they were building for themselves a small stone cottage on the slope of the hill above Erisaig; and that Daft Sandy had been taken away from the persecution of the harbour boys to become a sort of general major-domo—cook, gardener, and mender of nets. Moreover, each of the MacNicols has his separate bank-account now; each has got a silver watch; and Rob was saying the other day that he thought that he and his brothers and his cousin ought to take a trip to London (as soon as the herring-fishing was over), for perhaps they might see the Queen there, and at any rate they could go and have a look at Smithfield, where the English beheaded Sir William Wallace.

THE PUPIL OF AURELIUS.

CHAPTER I.

A BLOW FACED.

On a Sunday morning in the early part of November 1878 a stranger arrived at Euston Square, and passed from the gloom of the station into the brighter air of the London streets, there pausing for a second or two to look around him. He was a man of about fifty, short, thin, wiry, square-shouldered; his features firm even to sternness, and hardened by exposure to wind and weather; his hair gray; his beard also gray and clipped short. The harshness of his face, however, was in a measure tempered by the look of his eyes; these were calm and contemplative, perhaps even with a shade of melancholy in them. For the rest, he was well and warmly clad in home-spun cloth; and he carried with him a small hand-bag, which appeared to be his only luggage.

He hesitated only for a moment. As he turned off to the left he met two labourers coming along.

"This is the way to London Bridge, is it not?"

he asked, slowly, and with a strong northern accent.

"Yes, sir," said one of them; and then, as he looked after the departing stranger, he took the pipe from his mouth and grinned, and said to his companion,

"Scottie means to walk it."

The new-comer's next encounter was less satisfactory. A drunken-faced woman jumped up from a door-step and begged for alms. He had not seen her. Instinctively his hand went to his pocket. Then he glanced at her.

"No!" he said, with unnecessary severity, and passed on.

But instantly the woman was transformed into a cursing and swearing virago. She followed him, making the little thoroughfare resound with her shrill abuse. Most people would, in such circumstances, have looked out for a policeman, or tried to get away somewhere, but this man turned round and stood still and regarded the woman. There was neither anger nor surprise nor scorn in his look, but a calm observation. He listened to her foul language, as if wishing to understand it; and he regarded the bloated face and bleared eyes. The woman was not prepared for this examination. With another parting volley she slunk off. Then the

new-comer continued on his way, saying only to himself:

"It is strange. I do not think that God could have meant any of His creatures to be like that."

Now let us see what manner of man this was who was passing into the larger space and wan sunlight of Euston Road, making for London Bridge, with but little hurry, and always with his eyes regarding the withered trees, or the closed shops, or the early omnibuses with an observation that had no curiosity in it, rather as if these were mere passing phenomena that left no permanent impression on a mind too busily occupied with its own speculations.

His name was John Douglas. His father had been a small shipowner in Greenock, and, dying, had left this, his eldest son, a fortune of about £10,000. John Douglas, after patient judgment of the matter, arrived at the conclusion that it was far from just and fitting that he should have the exclusive use of this money, so he lent £7000, or thereabouts, to his two younger brothers, who forthwith took it, and, unhappily, themselves also, to the bottom of the sea, in a vessel which, recklessly, they had not insured. Thereupon John Douglas, having still over £3000, invested it in what was then considered a safe concern, and finding his

wants very few and very simple, repaired to the Renfrewshire coast, and found there a small cottage overlooking the Firth of Clyde and the sea, where he could live cheaply and comfortably. And he did live there very comfortably and contentedly, though not quite to the satisfaction of his neighbours, who resented the intrusion amongst them of a man who minded his own business, who would not listen to any tittle-tattle, who was absolutely indifferent as to what opinion, good or ill, they might have of him, and who took long and solitary walks among the hills on Sundays as on other days.

It ought to be said here at the outset that this man's character is not set up as in any way an exemplar. If mankind at large were so many John Douglases the world would not get on at all. We should have no iron bridges built, or Atlantic cables laid, or financial companies started, and we certainly should not have any man-killing machines a million or half-a-million strong; whereas every well-conducted person knows that such things are now-a-days absolutely necessary. The truth is, that John Douglas, or Captain Douglas, as the neighbours called him with a kind of grudging respect, was a skulker from the battle of humanity. What he wanted was a beach of white sand, a hot day, a

blue sea, a book, a pipe, and the absence of his fellow-creatures. He was kind to such people as he was forced to meet; and he was a favourite amongst the children in that part, for he bought them toys and sweetmeats when he went to Greenock; but he preferred the society of his books to that of his neighbours, and he was impatient of idle talk. Indeed, what was the use of their conversing with a man who was far more interested in the first blossoming of the furze in spring than in a Cabinet crisis, and who would go away and search for birds' nests in the woods, for the mere pleasure of looking at them, when the whole civilised world, from the Clock Lighthouse all the way to Largs, was convulsed with the news that a minister in a parish adjacent had been heard to say something disrespectful about Calvin?

The three books, one or other of which John Douglas usually carried with him on his rambles by sea-shore or through some country lanes, were the New Testament, Marcus Aurelius, and Tannahill's Poems; but perhaps it was the wise Emperor with whom he most closely communed as the waves rippled along the sand, and the shifting lights crossed the clear blue of the Arran hills. He had so entered into the spirit of that proud and patient stoicism, that he considered himself proof against

anything that might happen to him in life or in death. It was a voice from far away, it is true—muffled, as if from the tomb; but it was human, sympathetic, kindly in the main.

"Every moment think steadily as a Roman and a man to do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity, and feeling of affection, and freedom, and justice; and to give thyself relief from all other thoughts. And thou wilt give thyself relief, if thou doest every act of thy life as if it were the last, laying aside all carelessness and passionate aversion from the commands of reason, and all hypocrisy, and self-love, and discontent with the portion which has been given to thee. Thou seest how few the things are, the which if a man lays hold of, he is able to live a life which flows in quiet, and is like the existence of the gods; for the gods, on their part, will require nothing more from him who observes these things."

And again!

"If thou workest at that which is before thee, following right reason seriously, vigorously, calmly, without allowing anything else to distract thee, but keeping thy divine part pure, as if thou shouldst be bound to give it back immediately; if thou holdest to this, expecting nothing, fearing nothing, but satisfied with thy present activity according to nature,

and with heroic truth in every word and sound which thou utterest, thou wilt live happy. And there is no man who is able to prevent this."

Or if one should not find any great work in the world to tackle?—

"Always bear this in mind, that very little indeed is necessary for living a happy life. And because thou hast despaired of becoming a dialectician, and skilled in the knowledge of nature, do not for this reason renounce the hope of being both free and modest and social and obedient to God."

Or has one been injured?—

"The best way of avenging thyself is not to become like the wrongdoer."

Why should one desire praise or fear blame?—

"Which of these things is beautiful because it is praised, or spoiled by being blamed? Is such a thing as an emerald made worse than it was if it is not praised? or gold, ivory, purple, a lyre, a little knife, a flower, a shrub?"

John Douglas knew nothing of the opinion in which he was held by his neighbours; and, if he had known, he would not have heeded one jot.

Now it was in the waning of the year, when the great fuchsia-tree covering the front of Braeside Cottage had dropped all its dark-red bells, and when the rowan-trees along the road were yellowing,

though masses of the scarlet berries still remained to delight the eye, that the news of the breaking of the City of Glasgow Bank came to these parts. There were those who knew that the residue of Captain Douglas's small fortune was invested in that flourishing concern, which had been paying dividends of 10 and 11 per cent; and they also suspected that he would know nothing of the terrible crash, for he seldom read newspapers. But not one of them would go and take the bad news to him. If he had not been a very sociable man, it was not through pride. He had done many generous actions. The children were fond of him. They waited for himself to find out the misfortune that had overtaken him.

Douglas's first intimation was contained in a letter sent him by a solicitor in Greenock. The vague reference to what had happened he did not understand at first; but he called his old housekeeper and bade her to bring him the newspapers of the last few days; and then he sat down, quietly and composedly, and read the story of his ruin.

First came rumours about a certain bank. Then the definite statement that the City of Glasgow Bank had suspended payment. Then guesses at the deficit, beginning with £3,000,000, along with indignant comments about the manner in which the

business of the bank had been conducted, and commiseration for the shareholders, the large majority of whom, it was anticipated, would have to surrender every farthing of which they were possessed.

Douglas read on and read through; and was neither shocked nor bewildered. He even remembered something about an official communication which he had opened a day or two before, and hastily dropped in order to fling a book at a strange cat that had come into the garden, and was cowering in wait for a chaffinch. He scarcely knew enough of business to understand who the creditors were; but he could perceive that if they had even £2,000,000 owing to them, the first calls would far more than sweep away his little property and leave him a beggar. Very well. He looked at the newspapers again; there was nothing in these crumpled sheets that could hurt him. A branch of a tree blown down by the wind on the top of his head could hurt him; or a chimney-pot falling from a roof; or a horse lifting its leg and kicking him; but a newspaper report he could thrust into the fire. He looked out of the window; the broad waters of the Firth were all ruffled into a dark blue by the morning breeze, and the sunlight shone along the yellow shores of Innellan; and far in the south Arran's jagged peaks were a clear blue among the

silvery clouds: these things could not be altered by anything happening in Glasgow. He looked at his hands; there were ten fingers there that had not done much work in the world; surely it was time they should try? And surely they could win for him bread and milk, or at the worst bread and water? In the meantime the thought of the cat had recalled to him that he had not as yet scattered crumbs for the birds that morning. That was the first thing to be done; and so he went and did it.

There can be no doubt that this contemptuous indifference was largely the result of the teachings of Marcus Aurelius, which this solitary man had drunk in until they seemed to have got absorbed into his very blood. But there was something more; there was a vein of personal pride of a very distinct kind. He would not admit to himself that any number of bank-directors in Glasgow or elsewhere had the power to harm him. Moreover, when, after waiting a considerable time to see how things would go, he went to Greenock to consult the solicitor who had written to him, and to whom he was known, this stubborn pride and independence came out more strongly than ever.

"The question is," said he, in his slow, emphatic way, "do I owe the money, or do I not owe the money?"

"No doubt of it, Captain Douglas," the other remonstrated; "you are morally as well as legally bound. But the liquidators are human beings; they do not wish to press for the uttermost farthing; and well they know that this first call of £500 on every £100 of stock will ruin many and many a poor creature, and turn him or her out into the world. There is even a talk of a Relief Fund; I believe the Lord Provost of Glasgow and other gentlemen——"

John Douglas's face flushed quickly.

"I wish not to hear of such things," he said, with a touch of resentment. Then he added more slowly, "I will take money from no man. I will earn my own living; if I cannot do that, what title have I to live at all? But I will take this obligation from you yourself, Mr. Campbell; if you will lend me five pounds, which I will repay to you. And I would like to take with me a few portraits, of my family and forbears, that can be of no use to any one; and one or two books likewise; then the rest can go to the liquidators, to roup or scatter to the winds as they see fit. I am a man of few words; I will repay you the money, if my health remains to me; and it will be enough to carry me to London and start me there."

"To London!" said the tall fair man in spectacles.

"It is the great labour market of the world; it is natural I should go there. Besides, there is another thing," he added, with a trifle of embarrassment. "Our family were well known in these parts in former years, and respected. I know not what I may have to turn my hand to. I will begin where I can be alone."

He was a wilful man, and he had his way. He got the five pounds and the few pictures, and the three books named above; and when he entered the third-class carriage that was to bear him through the night to London, it was without fear. He had ten fingers, and he could live on a crust of bread and a drink of clear water. What was the hardship? Had not the great Emperor himself counted it among the blessings of his life—one of the things for which he was ever to be grateful—that he had been taught to work with his own hands?

CHAPTER II.

ALONE IN LONDON.

THIS, then, was the man who now found himself in the sickly daylight of the great city, walking along the wide thoroughfare on this Sunday morning. The grim and grizzled face was somewhat tired looking after the long and wakeful journey, and the dark eyes were fatigued and melancholy; but his step was light and firm. And it was well that it was so. He had been in other large towns before, but not in this one; and as he had determined to make for London Bridge, to get lodgings near there, —seeing that that looked on the map to be about the centre of the commercial district,—he had traced out the safest route, by Pentonville Road and City Road down to the Bank. As he trudged and trudged, however, and no Bank made its appearance, he gradually woke himself out of that dreamy and contemplative mood. He began to make inquiries about distance and so forth. The driver of a four-wheeled cab, his purple bemuddled face lighting up with a dull sort of humour, gave him a facetious invitation to get inside the tumble-down old vehicle.

The conductors of one or two passing omnibuses hailed him; and he gathered from their "Benk! Benk!" that at least he was in the right direction. But he was not going to spend money causelessly; so he trudged on.

At length, when he got to the wide square fronting the Royal Exchange, the solitariness of the place struck him with a strange chill. All the great buildings closed and deserted; not a habitable-looking house anywhere. But there were numbers of people passing along the thoroughfares—mostly groups of young men of about two-and-twenty, tallow-faced, round-shouldered, wearing over-coats and billycock hats, and smoking short pipes; and there were crowded omnibuses coming rolling along (what a difference was this roar and rabble from the quiet of the Sabbath morning far away there on the northern coast!) and these people must live somewhere. So again he contentedly trudged an; down King William Street; over the bridge spanning the misty river; along the Borough Road; until he arrived at Union Street. He had so far failed in his quest for lodgings; but in Union Street he espied a coffee-house; and as he had become both tired and hungry, he entered the dingy little place, sat down, and ordered a cup of coffee and a roll and butter.

It was a kind of shelter, after all; though everything was dreadfully dirty, and there was a heavy odour in the place. The waiter brought him a greasy newspaper; but he put it aside. Then came his breakfast. The butter was not touchable; but he reflected that it was a luxury which he, living on another man's money, had had no right to order. When he had paid back the £5, he would consider the question of butter—though not butter such as this. He ate the dry roll, and managed to swallow the strangely-tasting coffee; then he fell asleep; and was eventually wakened by the ringing of church bells.

So, having paid his shot, he wandered out again into the pale and misty sunlight; and as he had been struck by the appearance of St. Saviour's in crossing the bridge, he strolled back thither, and entered the church, and sat down in a pew. He remained through the earlier part of the service; but when the sermon began, he left. The streets were now quite busy, though the shops were closed. It was not like Sunday on the shores of the Firth of Clyde.

"In any case," he was thinking, "it can be no great breaking of the Sabbath that a man should provide himself with a lodging to cover his head."

Eventually, after much patient wandering and

inquiring, he found a house in the Southwark-bridge Road—he was attracted to it by the presence of one or two flower-boxes on the window-sills—where he was offered a small, fairly neat and clean bed-room for the sum of three-and-sixpence per week. Thereupon the bargain was closed; and John Douglas found himself established at least with headquarters, from whence he could issue to fight his battle with the great forces of London.

Well, day after day—nay, week after week—passed, and all his efforts to obtain employment had resulted in nothing. It was not through any shamefacedness or fastidiousness or false pride. He was ready to do anything. Many people thought this man a maniac, who calmly walked in and offered, in his slow, methodic Scotch speech, to copy letters for them, or do anything that could be pointed out to him, confessing, on interrogation, that he had been in no employment before, and could therefore produce no testimonials as to character or fitness. On his own showing, there was nothing special he could do; though he had bought a little treatise on book-keeping, and occasionally studied it in the evenings. As he walked about the streets and observed how all the people around him seemed to be fully occupied, and busy and contented, it occurred to him as strange that they should all have fallen

into these grooves so naturally. He looked at the clerk giving out tickets at a railway station, and thought he could do that also. Perhaps the business of the young men who every morning were to be seen inside the big windows of the drapers' shops in the Borough Road, decorating the place with ribbons and gowns, demanded a special knowledge that he had not acquired; but it could not be difficult, for example, to be a policeman? They seemed happy enough; good-natured; sometimes even with a word of chaff for the costermonger whom they ordered to move on, him and his barrow.

These not very anxious experiments, and quite idle speculations about the uses of various forms of labour, might have gone on indefinitely but for the very certain fact that Douglas's small stock of money was being slowly but surely exhausted. Slowly, it is true; for he had wholly given up tobacco; his dinner was a roll or a biscuit eaten in the street; and as his landlady charged him sixpence for each scuttleful of coals, he preferred to keep himself warm on these now bitterly cold evenings by tramping about outside and looking at the shops. That good woman, by the way, was sorely disappointed in this new lodger, out of whom she could make no indirect profit; and she had a waspish tongue. John Douglas regarded her taunts—almost amounting to

open insult—with a patient and mild curiosity. It was a little bit of psychological study, and more interesting than book-keeping by double entry. Meantime, things were becoming very serious; with all his penuriousness, he had arrived at his last half-sovereign.

CHAPTER III.

A FELLOW-SUFFERER.

One night, a few minutes after nine, Douglas was returning home along one of the badly-lit little thoroughfares in the Borough, when he saw the figure of a woman slowly subside on to the pavement in front of him. She did not fall; she trembled on to her knees as it were, and then lay prone — near a doorstep. Well, he had grown familiar with the sights of London streets; but even if the woman were drunk, as he imagined, he would lift her up, until some policeman came along.

He went forward. It was not a woman, but a young girl of about seventeen or so, who did not seem a drunken person.

"My lass, what is the matter with ye?" he said, kneeling down to get hold of her.

"Oh, I am so ill—I am so ill!" the girl moaned, apparently to herself.

He tried to raise her. She was quite white, and almost insensible. Then she seemed to come to; she struggled up a bit, and sought to support herself by the handle of the door.

"I shall be all right," she gasped. "I am quite well. Don't tell them. I am quite well—it was my knees that gave way——"

"Where do ye live, my lass?" said he, taking hold of her arm to support her; for he thought she was going to sink to the ground again.

"Number twelve."

"In this street?"

She did not answer.

"Come, I will help ye home, then."

"No, no!" she said, in the same gasping way; "I will sit down here a few minutes. I shall be all right. I—I am quite well——"

"Ye are not going to sit down on a doorstep on a night like this," he said, severely. "Come, pull yourself together, my lass. If it is number twelve, you have only a few yards."

He half-dragged and half-carried her along. He knocked loudly at the door. There came to it a tall, black-a-vised woman, who, the moment she saw the girl, cried out—

"Oh, Mary Ann, are you took bad again?"

"No—don't tell them," the girl said, as she staggered into the narrow passage. "They'll turn me off. They said so the last time. I shall be all right. But my head—is so bad."

They got her into the dingy little parlour, and laid her down on the horse-hair covered couch. Her hand was clasped to her head, and her whole frame was shivering violently, as if with cold.

John Douglas, living that recluse life up there in the north, had never before had to deal directly with sickness, and he was terribly anxious and alarmed. What was he to do? His first wild notion, observing the violent shivering, was to order hot whisky-and-water; then he thought it would be better to send for a doctor. But the tall, dark woman did not seem inclined to go or send for any doctor. She stood regarding the girl quite apathetically.

"Poor Mary Ann!" she said, watching her, as if she were a dog in a fit. "She wasn't took as bad as this before. She's been starving herself, she has to keep her mother and her young sisters; and she can't stand all day in the shop as she used to. I've seen it a-coming on."

"God bless me, woman," said Douglas, angrily, "we must do something instead of standing and

looking at the poor lass. Cannot you tell me where the nearest doctor is? Has one been attending her?"

"Poor Mary Ann," the woman said, composedly; "she'll come out of it; but it's worse this time. A doctor? She couldn't afford to have a doctor, she couldn't. A doctor would be bringing physic; she can't pay for physic, she can't. She owes me three weeks' rent, and I ain't ast for it once, not once. Thirteen hours a day standing behind a counter is too much for a slip of a girl like that. Poor Mary Ann! Is your head bad, my dear?"

Douglas made use of a phrase which is not to be found anywhere in the writings of Marcus Aurelius, and hurriedly left the house. He made for the nearest chemist's shop, and asked the youth there where he should find a doctor. The youth glanced towards the back room, and said Dr. Sweeney was at hand. Dr. Sweeney was summoned, and appeared: a hard-headed-looking youngish man, whom Douglas immediately bore away with him.

The young Irish doctor did not seem much concerned when he saw his patient. He seemed to be familiar with such cases. He said the girl must be put to bed at once. She was merely suffering from a feverish attack, on a system weakened by exhaustion and fatigue. Then he began to question the landlady.

The usual story. Girl in a draper's shop; mother and sisters in the country; sends them most of her earnings; probably does not take enough food; long hours; constant standing; drinking tea to stave off hunger; and so forth. Douglas listened in silence.

"And when she recovers from this attack, slight or severe," he said at length, "what would restore that young lass to a proper state of health?—can ye say that, doctor?"

"I can say it easily," said the young Irishman, with a sarcastic smile. "I can prescribe the remedies; and there are plenty of such cases; unfortunately the patients are not in a position to follow my prescriptions. I should prescribe good food, and fewer hours of work, and an occasional week in the country air. It is easy to talk of such things."

"Ay, that is so," said Douglas, absently.

He went home. He took from his pocket the biscuit, wrapped in a bit of newspaper, that he had meant for his supper; but he put it on the top of a little chest of drawers, thinking it would do for his breakfast in the morning, and he would save so much. Then he went to the little stock of money in his locked-up bag, and found there eight shillings and sixpence. He took seven shillings of

it, and went out again into the cold night, and walked along to the house where the sick girl was.

"Mistress," he said to the landlady, in his slow, staid way, "I have brought ye a little money that ye may buy any small things the lass may want; it is all I can spare the now; I will call in the morning and see how she is."

"You needn't do that," said the tall woman. "Poor Mary Ann—she'll be at the shop."

"She shall not be at the shop!" he said, with a frown. "Are ye a mad woman? The girl is ill."

"She'll have to be at the shop, or lose her place," said the landlady, with composure. "There's too many young girls after situations now-a-days, and they won't be bothered with weakly ones."

CHAPTER IV.

A RESOLVE.

However, as it turned out, there was to be no shop for Mary Ann the next day or for many a day to come. When John Douglas called in the morning, he was informed that she was "delirious-like." She was imploring the doctor — who had been there an hour before—not to let her lose her situation. She was talking about her mother and

sisters in an incoherent way; also about one Pete, who appeared to have gone away to Australia and never written since. Douglas looked at the girl, lying there with her flushed face, closed eyes, and troubled breathing, unconscious of his presence, only twisting the bed-clothes about with her hot hands.

"Poor Mary Ann," the landlady said contemplatively. "If she dies, she'll 'ave to be buried by the work'us. And if she lives, she'll be worse off than ever; for they won't take a girl with cropped hair into a shop, and the fear of infection besides. She ain't got a friend in the world, she ain't; except her own people, and they're only a drain on the poor thing. Poor Mary Ann! she *have* had a bad time of it. Perhaps it would be kinder in Providence if He took her; for who's to pay for her keep if she gets through the fever? Not that I would ask to be paid for her lodging; I ain't one like that; there's her room, and welcome; that's what I says to my husband when he come home last night; and neither him nor me's afraid of fever, nor would turn out a poor thing as have been took. But law! it would be months afore she'd get another place; and she ain't got nobody to look after her."

"What have you done with the money I gave you last night?" he asked.

"There it lies, sir—on the mantel-shelf. It ain't

for me to touch; it is for the doctor to give his orders about that money."

"Just put this eighteenpence to it, mistress, and ask the doctor what the poor lass may want. It is all I happen to have with me the now."

Then he left; and walked away with an unusual air of determination. He was not downcast because he had parted with his last sixpence.

"It is even better thus," this stern-faced man was saying to himself, "for now we must face facts, and get rid of speculation. Let us begin at the beginning—with one's ten fingers! Poor lass! It is a dreadful place, a great city like this; it has no compassion. Surely, in the country, she would not be so utterly thrown down in the race. Surely, some one would say, '*At meal-time come thou hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar;*' and would command the young men and say to them, '*Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.*' Poor lass! poor lass! Even that cadaverous-jawed, Tennants'-stalk of a woman thinks it would be better for her to die."

He walked quickly, his lips firm. It was a miserable morning; the noisy thoroughfares full of mist and wet and mud; drifts of sleet swooping

round corners; the air raw and cold. The river was scarcely visible when he crossed London Bridge; the steamers and ships were like ghosts in the fog. He made his way as quickly as he could through the crowded streets, until he reached Tower Hill; then he passed up into the Minories; there he paused in front of one or two shops, in the windows of which were the most miscellaneous objects—old clothes, waterproof leggings, tin cans, and what not. At last he entered one of these places, and after a great deal of haggling and argument, he exchanged his coat of grey home-spun for a much shabbier looking dingy blue over-coat, that appeared the kind of thing a pilot would wear. To this was added a woollen comforter; there was no money in the transaction. Douglas wrapped the comforter round his neck there and then, and put on the coat; when he stepped out again into the mud and snow and murky atmosphere, his appearance was much more reconcilable with the neighbourhood.

Still walking quickly, he went down to the London and St. Katharine Docks, passing under the shadow of the gaunt walls; and then along that dismal thoroughfare, Nightingale Lane, that looks like a passage between two great prisons; until at last, with moderate pace, and with a certain anxious, nervous look, as if he did not wish himself to be

seen, he arrived at the entrance to a space at the corner of the London Dock, which was enclosed with some rusted iron railings, and partially roofed over.

In this shed, shivering in the cold, and occasionally moving so as to avoid the whirling of the sleet, stood a number of most miserable looking wretches, men and lads. John Douglas knew very well who these were, and what they were there for. Here, so far as he had learned, was the only place in London where a starving creature could get work, without a character or qualification of any kind. Hither came those who, through drink, or idleness, or sheer misfortune, had got right down to the foot of the social ladder; waiting patiently in the dim hope that some extra pressure of work inside would occur to give them an hour or two's employment. Well, he did not hesitate long. He seized a moment when the attention of these poor devils had been attracted by some sound to the other side of the grating (where the foreman was expected to appear), and glided in among the group, hoping to be unperceived.

But what sharp eyes hunger makes! They had no sooner turned hopelessly away again, than every man and lad of them caught sight of the stranger. They did not resent his intrusion. They regarded him with curiosity, and with apathy. He looked

well-to-do for that kind of work. Perhaps if he were one of the lucky ones, he would stand a pot of beer on coming out in the afternoon.

But to their great astonishment, they were all to be lucky ones that morning. The foreman appeared, ran his eye over the group, and engaged the whole of them for the day,—all, except one dazed, drunken-looking tatterdemalion of sixty or so, whom he warned off by name. Almost before he knew where he was, John Douglas found himself at work in the docks, at fivepence an hour.

CHAPTER V.

TREASURE TROVE.

THE work was very easy, it seemed to him. What it might be in the warehouses he knew not; but here his business was simply to haul a small and light truck, carrying two boxes of oranges, from the unloading steamer along the side of the basin to the barge which was receiving them. The work was light, and there were pauses; moreover, the snow had ceased, and the surroundings—the ships and barges and what not—were picturesque enough; the scent of the oranges was pleasant. And his companions, these poor wrecks of humanity

who had drifted into this curious, quiet little pool, were in the main good-humoured, though most of them seemed too depressed to speak much. Of course they instantly called him "Scottie." Scottie got through his short day's work with satisfaction; and when at four o'clock the great bell began to toll, and when his wages, two shillings and a penny, were paid him, and when he set out for the gate, he was much contented, and was considering that, if he did his work diligently and respectfully and in silence, it was not at all unlikely that the foreman would take him on as a regular hand, at four-and-twenty shillings a week.

He was thus thinking, and he had got almost to the gate, when something ahead of him occurred that made him shrink back with a look of dismay in his face. He saw that each man as he passed through the portal held up his arms, while one of the gatekeepers passed his hands over his clothes. They were being searched. Douglas stood still; his whole spirit in angry revolt. He would rather give up his day's wage, the coat off his back, the cap from his head—anything than have to go through this shameful ordeal. He looked back: could he not get out by the wicket at which he entered, at the other end of the docks?

"Come on, Scottie; you ain't been priggin'

oranges, eh?" said one of his mates, laughing at him.

Now it was quite clear that this searching of the outgoing labourers was in most cases merely formal; but when the gatekeepers saw this man hanging back, they naturally concluded he had been stealing. They called to him to come along. He hesitated no longer. With a grim air he advanced and held up his arms in the usual way. He would betray no shame. Doubtless it was a necessary precaution. And as he had stolen nothing, they could not hurt him by merely suspecting him.

But this gatekeeper's inspection was minute; and when he came to some slight protuberance on the breast of the coat, which, indeed, Douglas himself had not noticed, he demanded to know what it was. Nay, he had the coat taken off. On examination, a part of the lining of the coat was found to have been cut open and carefully sewn together again.

"Took all that trouble?" said the gatekeeper, glancing at him.

"I did not know there was any pocket there," said Douglas, hurriedly; "I got the coat only this morning."

"Oh, indeed," said the other, with a slight

derisive laugh. "I shouldn't wonder if we found some tobacco all the same."

The lining was ripped open, in the presence of the little crowd of labourers, carmen, stevedores, and so forth, who, seeing something unusual going on, had collected. Douglas certainly looked very guilty. His face was burning red; and the natural sternness of his features made him look as if he were angry at being detected. But, on the other hand, the expression on the face of the big yellow-bearded gatekeeper changed very suddenly, when he took from inside the lining a little oblong parchment bag, flat and dirty, and opened it, and drew out a thin packet of what turned out to be Bank of England notes. Not many, it is true; but a marvel all the same. The gatekeeper glanced at the culprit again, and said good-humouredly,

"Bought that coat this morning? Then you're in luck's way, my man, that's all I can say. We don't keep them kind o' goods in our warehouses. There ye are."

He once more examined the dirty little parchment bag all over; there was no scrap of writing on it, or on any of the notes.

"There ye are," he said, giving him back both the coat and the valuable package. "There's some as would advertise in the papers about that money;

and there's some as would go to Scotland Yard, and expect to get something; and there's some, seein' as there's no writin', as would stick to it, and set up a shop. Where did you buy the coat, my man?"

"At an outfitter's in the Minories—it was an exchange for my own," said Douglas hastily; he was anxious above all things, money or no money, to get away from this crowd of curious faces.

"An outfitter! yes, it's a fine name. Anyhow, the money don't belong to *him*. Most likely, now, that coat belonged to some seafaring man as got drownded, and the poor chap's things sold. Pass on there, my lads!"

Douglas escaped from the crowd, and got away. He was greatly bewildered and excited; not often in his life had he come through so much in so short a time. He walked hard, and did not stop until he sat down in his own little room, in the cold and dark.

Hour after hour he sat there, himself fighting with himself; or rather his consciousness of what was right fighting with his great desire to do something to help that luckless child, lying there a few streets further off, friendless, poverty-stricken, fever-stricken, with the most hopeless of futures before her. He argued with himself that no doubt the gatekeeper's guess was correct; the money had

belonged to some sailor or pilot, who had been drowned, and his personal effects, whether found on his dead body, or perhaps in the hold of a derelict, sold. Certainly these notes did not belong to the old-clothes' man in the Minories. It almost seemed as if a special act of Providence had placed this money at his disposal to succour this helpless one in her sickness, and support and strengthen her in her convalescence. As for himself, he never dreamed of touching it for his own uses. He had found out at last one way of earning his own living. But even if he were to be permanently employed, at twenty-four shillings a week, how could he save enough out of that to give this girl generous nourishment, and a little wine, and country air, when she should get well enough again? In the meantime, were her mother and sisters to starve? And it never occurred to him to ask why he should take this sudden interest in this stranger girl or in her family. The fact was, he had never before been confronted with so clear a case of hardship and distress. The solitariness, the helplessness of the child appealed to him: it was as if he had seen a wren threatened by a hawk, or a rabbit seized by a weasel. He could not help interfering, and doing his utmost.

And how could this money of a dead and un-

known man be put to a better use? Was he to go and bury it in Scotland Yard? Was he to advertise for a crowd of impostors to claim it? He lit the gas and examined the notes. There were seven —£35—a fortune! He saw the girl in a little cottage, the window open to let the first of the spring air into the room, she lying well wrapped up on a couch, a few wild-flowers on the table, daffodils and primroses from the woods, pink-tipped daisies from the banks, the red dead-nettle from the hedge-rows, and perhaps herself, to please him, and out of gratitude as it were, reading some of Tannahill's songs, "Loudon's bonnie woods and braes," "Langsyne, beside the woodland burn," "Keen blows the wind o'er the Braes o' Gleniffer," "We'll meet beside the dusky glen on yon burn side." Poor child! she had probably seen but little of the country during her hard life. Would she be surprised when all the hawthorn came out, and the lanes were scented? Perhaps he would be able to teach her a little of the beauty of simple things, and remove from her mind the poor ideas about what is great and admirable and desirable begotten in a large city. "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." No doubt her notion of what was

most beautiful and desirable in the world was to be dressed in satin, and driving in a coach, with powdered footmen behind, to a Royal Drawing-room.

All this was so specious and plausible. The money lying there seemed to belong to him more than to any other. And what good might be done with it! Even if the real owner were alive, surely he would assent. Thirty-five pounds: ten pounds to be put into a savings' bank in her name; the rest to clear off the doctor's bill, give a weekly allowance to her people, and enable her to get a couple of months, or even more, with strict economy, in the country, before returning to the hard, dull work of London.

"I did not know," he said aloud, in his slow, deliberate Scotch way, "that money could have such value."

By-and-by he rose, put the notes into the bag again, and that in his pocket; then he turned off the gas and went out, thinking he would walk round and see how the girl was getting on. That is to say, he tried to make himself believe that that was all there was in his mind; but he knew very well that there was something else. There was a haunting, uneasy consciousness. Suddenly, at the corner of the street, instead of turning eastward as he should have done, he abruptly turned in the other direction, and began to walk quickly. "The money

is not mine; I will have none of it," was his ultimate and fixed decision. "No dreams, man; no temptation. The first step to perdition is no doubt smooth enough. If I can do the lass a good turn, it must be with my own money."

He walked to Scotland Yard, finding it without difficulty, for he knew all the familiar features of London on the map; and there he told his story, and delivered up the money, and left his address. He departed with a light heart. Nay, when he had crossed Westminster Bridge again, he looked out for a poor-looking coffee-house, and went in and had some coffee and a roll, and thought he never had enjoyed any dinner more. He looked at the evening paper, too, and then went out again into the wet streets, and continued his way. He was further cheered by hearing that the sick girl, though still feverish and perfectly weak and prostrate, had not, in the doctor's opinion, caught any serious malady, and only wanted time and care, and afterwards some better nourishment, to bring her round.

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF THE EPISODE.

So with courage and patience, and with a final gulp about that searching business, he returned to

his work at the docks, and very soon got engaged as a permanent hand. He was a favourite with the foremen, for he was industrious and minded his own business; but he was greatly disliked by his companions. They would not believe, and he was at no pains to convince them, that he had not kept the found money; and they had expected him, if ever he returned to the docks, to stand treat liberally. They were angry at Scottie's stinginess, and took to taunting him. These casual jeers he heeded no more than the idle wind; they could not hurt.

His savings slowly increased, his only serious expenditure being his weekly rent. When, each morning at twelve o'clock, the great bell rang in the docks, and the men and women came in with their baskets and barrows, his dinner consisted of a couple of penny sausage-rolls ("bags of mystery," his mates called them), and these were really quite fresh and clean and wholesome-looking. In the afternoon or evening, he generally went round to the house where the girl, Mary Ann Ellis, was now so far recovered that she could sit propped up in bed for an hour or so; and he would have a chat with her and her landlady, and a cup of tea, with bread and butter—for which he privately paid. He found this girl interesting, simple, and intensely grateful, but ignorant to a degree that he had not

thought possible in a human being capable of reading. In one respect this was lucky, for she believed any nonsense he told her; and the quite imaginary associations of ladies and gentlemen for the dispensing of needful charity received her most earnest thanks for those little sums that were sent to her mother, or that enabled her to pay off her doctor's weekly bill.

One day John Douglas was leaving the docks as usual, when he was overtaken by a tall and handsome young fellow, whom he knew to be connected with the Customs department.

"I say, aren't you the man that found a lot of money?"

Douglas had grown sulky, or rather suspicious of foolery, and was inclined to keep his own counsel. But the accent of this stranger went straight to his heart; he had not heard the Scotch way of speaking for many a day. So he turned and regarded the young man, and frankly told him what he had done with the money. This led to further questions, for the younger man's curiosity was aroused. It was the City of Glasgow Bank, then? But why take to such work as this? Couldn't he get into some office? Did he know a little of book-keeping?

The upshot of all this was that, about a week after, John Douglas found himself installed as clerk

at a tall desk in the back-room of a co-operative store connected with the docks, at a salary of two pounds a week; and the first and immediate result of this was that the mysterious charitable associations of which he was apparently the agent, commissioned him to inform Mary Ann Ellis that she need not try to get any situation for at least two months' time, because fourteen shillings a week would be paid to her during that period, to enable her to get thoroughly well again.

John Douglas grew to be a proud man. He was proud of having paid off that five pounds, and standing free of all the world; he was proud of his gradually-increasing account at the Government Savings Bank as a guarantee against future ill; but he was proudest of all of his patient, whose convalescence he in a measure attributed to himself. The days were longer now, and the weather fine; on the clear evenings, or Saturday afternoons, these two would get into an omnibus, and go away out to Camberwell Green, or Kennington Park, or Clapham Common, and sit on a bench, and watch the young folks enjoying their sports and diversions. He was better dressed now, and she had got into the way of calling him "Sir." He told her a great deal about Scotland, and the mountains, and the glens with the birch-trees and waterfalls; but he

always got into a difficulty when he came to the sea, which she had never seen. She could not understand that.

"Now, lassie, look at that piece of water there," he would say to her, at the pond on Clapham Common. "Cannot you imagine its going out and out until it gets far beyond the trees and houses yonder, until it gets beyond everything, and meets the sky?"

"I see what you mean, sir," she would say; "but I can't understand it: for I can't help thinking, if there was nothing on the other side to hold it up, it must tumble down. How can water hold itself up in the air?"

"Dear, dear me, lass!" he would say impatiently, "have I not explained to ye how everything in the world, land and hills and everything, is held together?"

"Yes, sir; but water shifts so," she would say; and he would take to something else.

The two months went by, and she got stronger and stronger, though sometimes she grew a little anxious about her chances of getting another situation. During this constant companionship, he had become much attached—in a compassionate sort of fashion—to this child whom chance had thrown in his way. He could see her good points, and her

weak ones. She was of a kindly disposition; truthful, he thought; with no very distinct religion, but she had a general desire to be good; simple and frugal in her ways of living,—though this was a necessity, and she had no idea of frugality being in itself a virtue. On the other hand, her views as to what was most to be desired in life were simply the result of the atmosphere in which she had lived; and she confessed to him that the most beautiful thing she had ever seen was the arrivals at a Mansion House ball—the coloured stair-cloth, the beautiful ladies, the brilliant uniforms. Her knowledge of politics was entirely derived from the cartoons of the comic journals in the shop windows; and she had any quantity of vague and vulgar prejudices about Catholics, Radicals, and Jews. But this patient listener, who seemed interested in her foolish little opinions, was a largely tolerant man. Such things were; let us make the best of them,—that was what he seemed to say. And as all the phenomena of the universe appeared to him to be worthy of respectful attention—even if one did not go the length of vexing one's self about any one of them—he was willing to learn that, in the opinion of this profound observer, the Catholic priests were bad men, who would let you do anything that was wrong if only you paid them enough money for absolution.

One evening, when he went round as usual, he found Mary Ann in great excitement; she had evidently been crying, and now she was laughing in a half-crying way.

"What is the matter, lassie?" said he severely, for he did not like "scenes."

"Oh, sir, Pete has written—at last—at last!" she said, crying all the more, but in a glad sort of way, and looking again at the letter she held in her two hands.

"But who is Pete?"

"My sweetheart, sir; I never said anything about him—I thought he had forgotten us—but now he says he wouldn't write until he had good news, and now there is good news enough,—oh yes, there is! there is! For he has got a good place, and good prospects—and here is money to take me out, and my mother and sisters, too—all except fifteen pounds, Pete says, and that he'll send in three months' time. Oh, sir! you don't know what a good fellow Pete is!"

John Douglas sat down. His heart felt a little heavy; he scarcely knew why. But he began to ask a few questions, in a slow matter-of-fact way; and he did not remain long. He saw that the girl wanted to read and re-read the good news to herself, and draw pictures of all that was coming.

The next afternoon Mary Ann got a note from him, with an enclosure. Thus it ran:—

"DEAR CHILD,—You need not wait through three months of uncertainty. I enclose for you what will make up the passage-money, and also pay the expenses of your mother and sisters' coming to London. Accept this quietly and sensibly, and do not make any fuss about it, nor when I see you. I shall be busy this evening, and may not call.

"Your friend,

"JOHN DOUGLAS."

But all the same Mary Ann came round quickly, and with her the tall, gaunt, dark, composed landlady; and there was a great scene, Mary Ann crying and accusing herself of unheard-of stupidity for not having guessed that he all along had been her benefactor; and he, on the other hand, sternly bidding her hold her peace and not talk foolishness.

"Ye did me a great service, ye foolish lass," he said; "ye made me take to actual work when I was merely idling and loitering about. Ye gave me an object to work for, and pleasant companionship for a space, and now, if I must find something else, that is as it has been ordered; and I maun bide my time."

A few days afterwards he saw the mother when she arrived—a poor, limp sort of creature—and the two bewildered little girls. He could not, because of office work, go with them, as he had wished, to Southampton; but he accompanied them to the railway station, early in the morning, and bade them farewell. And as he turned away, he said to himself,

"These poor creatures I shall doubtless see no more in this world; but they will have a little regard for me, perhaps, while they live, and that is something. And now I will consider myself free to spend a trifle of money on myself, when I get it saved again; and I will use it during the holidays they speak of to take a trip back home again, and see the old place, and that the graves of my people are taken care of. And I may be able to make dispositions, too, so that when I am taken I may be placed there also; for it is but natural that one should wish to rest among one's own."

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.